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Contents

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GEORGE STEINER | What is "Swiss"? (article) 1399-1400 |
| P. K. O'BRIEN | Jean-François Bergier: <i>Histoire économique de la Suisse</i> 1400 |
| JOHN WARRACK | Clive Brown: <i>Louis Spohr - A critical biography</i> 1401 |
| NORMAN DELMAR | Herta Blaukopf (Editor): <i>Gustav Mahler/Richard Strauss - Correspondence 1888-1911</i> 1401 |
| ROY PORTER | H. I. Dutton: <i>The Patent System and Inventive Activity During the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1853</i> 1402 |
| ERIC ROBINSON | David A. Hounshell: <i>From the American System to Mass Production 1800-1932 - The development of manufacturing technology in the United States</i> 1402 |
| DAVID CANNADINE | K. Theodore Hoppen: <i>Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland 1832-1885</i> 1403 |
| A. J. AYER | Bertrand Russell: <i>Theory of Knowledge - The 1913 manuscript</i> 1404 |
| GEOFFREY WARNOCK | Michael H. Robbins: <i>Promising, Intending, and Moral Autonomy</i> 1404 |
| PAT ROGERS | J. Kent Clark: <i>Goodwin Wharton</i> 1405 |
| CHARLES TOWNSHEND | Iverach McDonald: <i>The History of The Times - Volume V, Struggle war and peace 1939-1966</i> 1406 |
| RUDOLF KLEIN | Logan Gourlay (Editor): <i>The Beaverbrook I Knew</i> 1406 |
| COLIN SEYMOUR-URE | James Deakin: <i>Straight Stuff - The reporters, the White House and the truth</i> 1406 |
| D. J. ENRIGHT | Frances Donaldson: <i>The British Council - The first fifty years</i> 1407 |
| J. C. H. THOMPSON | Christopher Isherwood: <i>Prater Viole. The World in the Evening, A Meeting by the River, Exhumations</i> 1408 |
| ADOLF MUSCHG | The Trouble with Good Design (article) 1409-10 |
| JONATHAN STEINBERG | Alberto Nussli: <i>Terra Matia</i> 1410 |
| GEORGES POULET | The Indeterminacy of Amiel (article) 1411-14 |
| ROBIN BUSS | Philippe Jaccottet: <i>A travers un verger. La Semaison: 1954-1979</i> 1412 |
| CLIVE H. CHURCH | Information, Please 1412 |
| IAN BOYD WHYTE | John McPhee: <i>The Swiss Army - La place de la Concorde suisse</i> 1413 |
| ERICK KORN | David Meili: <i>Schweizer Bauernhaus - Ländliche Bauten und ihre Bewohner</i> 1413 |
| MICHAEL IGNATIEFF | Reminders 1414 |
| PETER KEMP | Letters on Science and Values, English at Cambridge, Empson and Religion 1415 |
| PATRICIA CRAIG | Commentary |
| IAN DONALDSON | <i>Crossing the Channel: The Franco-British trade in Ideas (ICA)</i> 1416 |
| IRVING WARDLE | Shakespeare: <i>King John (BBC2)</i> 1416 |
| CRAIG BROWN | William Mastrosimone: <i>Extremities (Duchess Theatre)</i> 1416 |
| ARTHUR MARSHALL | Author, Author 1416 |
| TONY RUSSELL | Anne Barton: <i>Ben Jonson, Dramatist</i> 1417 |
| MAX BELL | George Rowell and Anthony Jackson: <i>The Repertory movement - A history of regional theatre in Britain</i> 1418 |
| RICHARD WILLIAMS | Melvin Bragg: <i>Laurence Olivier</i> 1418 |
| COLIN GREENLAND | Giles Brandreth: <i>John Gielgud - A celebration</i> 1418 |
| SAVKAR ALTINEL | John Russell Taylor: <i>Alec Guinness - A celebration</i> 1418 |
| BLAKE MORRISON | Simon Callow: <i>Being an Actor</i> 1418 |
| I. DEMADARIAGA | Harold Hobson: <i>Theatre in Britain - A personal view</i> 1418 |
| TONY BRIGGS | Wilfrid Mellers: <i>A Darker Shade of Pale - A backdrop to Bob Dylan</i> 1419 |
| FAITH WIGZELL | Jon Savage: <i>The Kinks - The official biography</i> 1419 |
| OWEN CHADWICK | Gerry Hirst: <i>Nowhere to Run - The story of soul music</i> 1419 |
| JEAN STAROBINSKI | Gary Kilworth: <i>The Songbirds of Pain</i> 1419 |
| PATRICE HIGONNET | Harry Harrison: <i>West of Eden</i> 1419 |
| C. J. HUGHES | William Gibson: <i>Neuromancer</i> 1420 |
| DEBORAH STEINER | Historical fiction in brief 1420 |
| MARTIN GIBSON | The Editor Regrets (poem) 1420 |
| GEORG KREIS | Philip Longworth: <i>Alexis - Tsar of All the Russias</i> 1421 |
| MARTIN GILBERT | Patrick O'Meara: <i>K. F. Kyle - A political biography of the Decembrist poet</i> 1421 |
| JOSEPH RYKWERF | Vladimir Volkoff: <i>The Russian Viking</i> 1421 |
| ROGER CARDINAL | Peter Stadler: <i>Der Kulturkampf in der Schweiz</i> 1422 |
| S. S. FRAWER | Huntington Williams: <i>Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography</i> 1423-4 |
| MARTIN DAVIES | César-Frédéric de la Harpe: <i>Correspondance sous la République Helvétique</i> 1424 |
| DAVID GASCOYNE | Hans Tschinkel: <i>Wer regiert die Schweiz?</i> 1424 |
| JOHN H. MOLE | Ruedi Brässel and others (Editors): <i>Zauberformel - Fäulter Zauber: SP-Bundesratsbestellung und Opposition in der Schweiz</i> 1425 |
| MANFRED OSTERJOER | Jean-François Aubert: <i>Exposé des institutions politiques de la Suisse, à partir de quelques affaires controversées</i> 1425 |
| | Claire Torricelli-Pache: <i>Le Pouvoir est pour demain - Les femmes dans la politique suisse</i> 1425 |
| | Jacques Grinevald, André Gaponer, Lucille Hanouz and Pierre Lehmann: <i>La Quadrature du CERN</i> 1425 |
| | Diplomatic Business (article) 1426 |
| | Emmanuel Haymann: <i>Le Camp du Bout du Monde - 1942, Des enfants juifs de France à la frontière suisse</i> 1426 |
| | Jacob Burckhardt: <i>Die Kunst der Betrachtung - Aufsätze und Vorrede. The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance</i> 1427 |
| | Hugo Ball: <i>Der Künstler und die Zeitkrankheit - Ausgewählte Schriften</i> 1428 |
| | Robert Walser: <i>Romane und Erzählungen. Maler, Poet und Dichter - Aufsätze über Kunst und Künstler</i> 1429 |
| | Rolf Kieser: <i>Erzwingung, Symbolik - Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Georg Kaiser und Bertolt Brecht im Schweizer Exil</i> 1429 |
| | Charles-Albert Cingria - 1883-1954 |
| | Charles-Albert Cingria: <i>Bols sec bols vert. Florides helvétiques et autres textes</i> 1430 |
| | Catherine Colomb: <i>Châteaux en enfance</i> 1430 |
| | Bernard Baillif: <i>La Créature</i> 1430 |
| | H. M. Waldson (Editor): <i>Anthology of Modern Swiss Literature</i> 1431 |
| | Among this week's contributors 1431 |
| | Index of books reviewed 1431 |
| | Information, Please 1431 |
| | "Glaciers des Bognans traversés d'une croasse" 1886, by F. and Georges Charnaud, reproduced from <i>Montagne: Photographies</i> 1884 & 1914 edited by François Guillemin (127 pp., with 90 sepia illustrations, Paris: Denoel (on the Muses de Chambéry), 1983, 220 F.) |

TLS December 7 1984 SWITZERLAND

What is 'Swiss'?

George Steiner

Thinking back, perhaps, to the arcaded and polished street in Bern in which, in 1904-5, he wrote the five papers which transformed physics and cosmology, or to the University of Geneva where in 1909 he received his first doctorate, *honoris causa*, Albert Einstein (who retained Swiss citizenship to the end of his life), defined Switzerland as "the most beautiful corner on Earth I know". That beauty is at once evident and singular. It overwhelms in the high mountains of the Bernese Oberland, in the abrupt valleys of the Engadin, in the stillness of the lakes and the dark Jura woods. Since the eighteenth century, jewellers, clockmakers, artists, the exiled and the rich, have sought out the vineyards and the light, itself peculiarly vital with the chill of the high places, of the Leman or the Ticino. The hammered gold of autumn in the Valais is like no other; or the coming of spring in the *alpages* above Rilke's Muzot and Nietzsche's Sils Maria.

But this loveliness is singular in its humanness. With the exception of the alpine summits or of the isolated valley beyond Valpurga, in the eastern corner, the walker is rarely out of touch. The bells of ancient steeples reach him almost at the mountains' peak. The lights of towns and villages can be seen from the cols and around the turn of the valley. Vineyard and hewn stone, the Roman bridge and the romantic city gate, the great roofs around the farm-yards, the loggias and arcades which give to Basel and Bolzano, to Bern and Lugano their ancient urbanity, tell of a constancy, of an attentive opportunism of human settlement and use alien to the prodigal emptiness of, say, the mountains of Norway or even the unmastered forests of New England. Man has been watchfully at home in Switzerland since the beginnings of history (Leman may be a Celtic or pre-Celtic name). The beauty of the land is enhanced but also rounded, contained by its presence. The effect can, at times, be that of a medieval miniature, its depths, its luminosity close-bound.

It may be that the beauty and the patina of this "most beautiful corner on earth" (I have not seen Kashmir) is also its unifying factor. It is difficult to make out where else national identity would have its source.

The ethnic, linguistic, religious divisions of Switzerland, of what is, literally and formally, the Helvetian Confederation are well known. Roman Catholicism, in the patrician, Bras-

mian tradition one associates with Basel or in the more populist, demographically expansive vein of Italian Switzerland, presses on the reformed churches. Geneva, Calvin's proud citadel, is now under mounting Catholic challenge. Its refusal to allow a Roman Catholic bishop cannot last. According to the latest studies, some 65 per cent of the total Swiss population speak German and/or different dialects of Swiss-German; just over 18 per cent are French-speakers; almost 10 per cent speak Italian as their first or only tongue; among the remaining 6 per cent, Romansh, though

becoming the *interlingua* of Swiss finance and industry, of technology and information. Fluency in three or four languages - French, German, Italian, English - is, for Swiss business and banking, becoming a daily necessity. To this will be added, certainly so far as Basel, Bern and Zürich are concerned, knowledge of the home-dialect, of the local, strongly-differentiated branch of sixteenth and seventeenth-century German. (These branches, *Berner-Deutsch* and the vivid *patois* of Zürich, in particular, have their own literatures, their folk-theatre, their press. Romansh lexicographers

tween Zürich and French-oriented Geneva, between the Protestant banker and the Catholic herdsman, between the profoundly conservative city-fathers of Lausanne and the youth-culture which erupted on to their streets in brusque violence and anarchic derision two years ago, is great. The very smallness of the country (40,000 square kilometres) concentrates, makes momentarily jagged, the fault lines of mutual dissociation.

What, then, is "Swiss"?

Although Switzerland has neither produced nor been anatomized by a de Tocqueville, there have been many attempts to answer this question. Normally, the argument is one of shared history. The paradox and possibility of co-existence between cantons, languages, faiths and sharply distinct sensibilities grew, painfully, out of a resolution of independence, of eccentricity within and towards the great European nation states. That resolution constitutes the core, both mythical and historical, of Switzerland's image of itself. Coherence came of resistance to Austrian, Burgundian and French invaders. Being, often, local and internally divided, this resistance engendered an alternative model to that of centralized European nationalism. Even under foreign attack or in victory, Switzerland remained a federation, stronger at its edges than at the centre, a plebiscitary republic proudly conservative of its patchwork quilt of internal autonomies. Swiss neutrality (to be debated, once again, in the forthcoming national debate and referendum on whether or not Switzerland should apply for membership in the United Nations) is the complex circumstance and product of this conservatism. It is not only a safeguard towards the outside world; it helps ensure a certain political weakness and provinciality at the centre. Generals are suspect creatures to be tolerated only in rare moments of unwanted crisis (world wars raging across the borders).

The Swiss army is, nevertheless, said to be the principal cement in the structure of Swiss confederate identity. Whether this is still so is a much-argued theme. The great role of military service and annual reserve and territorial duties in Swiss life is undeniable. So, as well, is the importance in the academic establishment, of friendships formed and patronage cultivated during one's military training (officers tend to belong to a freemasonry of subsequent social and economic preferment). It is no longer clear, however, to what extent military conscription and training erodes regional or



"The Engadin" (Graubünden) by Jean Mohr who is best known for his collaborations with John Berger which include *Another Way of Telling* (a book on photography), 1980, and *Seventh Man* (a study of migrant workers), 1982.

now in use in only a few valleys of the Grisons, figures, since 1938, as the fourth "national language".

But such statistics and general lines of internal stress, arresting as they are, convey little of the actual complexity and tensions of the Swiss condition. Dialects vary, often sharply, from the mouth of a valley to its upper reaches. Religious and linguistic frontiers - the two need not always coincide - cut across certain streets in Fribourg-Fribourg. Unable or unwilling to use either German or Swiss-German, but having, more and more, to communicate with employers, directors, managers and employees tiding in from German-speaking Switzerland, the Genevese, in their banks and insurances, in their hotels and supermarkets, resort to English. Increasingly, as in so many other hybrid communities, Anglo-American is

and dialectologists record five principal types of the language.)

Recent papal visits and the location in Switzerland of the very centre of Tridentine, anti-ecumenical Catholicism, have thrown light on the covert, carefully guarded religious antinomies in Swiss history and society. But these antinomies are real. In many regions and communities the lines of familial and professional separation run sharp. At least one universality, it is said, has, for decades, sought to balance precisely the number of Protestants and of Catholics on its professional roster. For the Protestant of the *Suisse romande* Milton's opposition of Geneva to Rome, his invocation of sacred strife and uncompromising reform in "Helvetia's icy caverns" retains an aura of actuality. In a more general way, the material, the ethnic, the psychological distances be-

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linguistic divisions. As one sociolinguist has observed: sermons and staff-commands are given in German, orders to enlisted men in a bewildering variety of dialects and *patois*. Though as yet sporadic, moreover, and harshly censored, fundamental doubts about military service are being raised, particularly by the young. The great taboo of political-conscientious objection is weakening. It is here that a number of my colleagues at the University of Geneva, themselves ex-officers and on annual call, see the coming challenge to long-established conventions of "Swissness".

What do Swiss literatures tell us about the content of this elusive term? One's answer is to be sure, bound to be fragmentary and impressionistic. But a number of suggestive constants do, I think, emerge.

Regionalism, a rootedness in local colour, characterizes not only dialect literatures and what might be called currents of "primitivism" in Swiss poetry and fiction. It constitutes a major element in the work of such masters as Gottfried Keller, Carl Spitteler or C.F. Ramuz. Even where his vision and concerns are wide-ranging, a Swiss writer inclines to circle, hawk-like, around a distinct corner of native ground. A Swiss ear perceives the defined sense of place, the subtle bonds to locale, even in such "international" novelists, such explorers of unhoused modernity as Max Frisch and Adolf Muschg (both of whom are, today, among the dominant figures in German prose and in the European imagination).

A second and persistent strand is that of revolt. The self-suppressions of vivid feeling, of anarchic impulse, the shrewd bias towards disciplined mediocrity which are built into Swiss educational and political existence (the positive term would be "survival"), press upon and exasperate Swiss literatures. Already in the 1840s, witness the early Keller, the cry was one of suffocation, of smothering cant. The Geneva word is *norosité*. The truly great ones are either imported (Calvin, Nietzsche, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann) or leave in bitterness (Rousseau, Klees). Hence a vehement *anti-Swissness* in much of the finest of Swiss writing: in Dürrenmatt, in Frisch, in Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, in that irreverent satirist Gerold Späth. Hence the perfect apocryphal of Dada to its Zürich setting. What can an artist do, what can he hope to alter in that pallid sanatorium of a land – a sanatorium in whose cellars, as Spitteler showed in his astounding novella, *Conrad der Leutnant*, currents of choked violence are at work?

Where revolt is essentially impotent, the option of solitude lies to hand. After ten years, my own hunch is that a certain form of *soloness* is Switzerland's main crop. Marvell's famous tag haunts one: "a fine and private place". The fineness and the privacy are genuine. I know of no community where one's right to think, to work in comely privacy, within material privileges and efficacies which minimize the intrusions of public life, is more finely guarded. It is just because, once a year, the great and savage drums are allowed to wake the night in the famous carnival at Basel, that the customary silences, the discretions of spirit and gesture behind closed doors are so palpable. But the sepulchral intimations in Marvell's lines are also applicable. There is, throughout Swiss literatures, a motif of self-burial, of subterranean inwardness.

Amiel's diary, kept in virtual secrecy from 1847 to 1881, will occupy seventeen thousand printed pages. Ludwig Hohl, whose *Berg/Wald* can stand beside the stories of Kleist, lived, literally, in a kind of cave or masked basement, below what he took to be the vulgar traffic of Geneva streets. From *Silber* and *Andorra* to his most recent fictions, solitude, the powerlessness of human need and communication, obsesses Max Frisch (as they did Rousseau, before him). Not infrequently, the enforced or chosen privacy of the Swiss writer, his sense of inner exile, have led to mental collapse and even to suicide. The names, the tragic careers of Adolf Wölfli, Robert Walser, Karl Stamm or Hans Morgenstern come to mind.

Even in Jacob Burckhardt, whom I take to be the most truly representative man of genius and of feeling produced by Swiss culture (there are important ways in which Rousseau and Jung remain "outsiders"), equilibrium was hard-won and under recurrent stress. Burckhardt's spell-bound but resistant relations to

Nietzsche, the alternance of generous fascination and of evasive terror in his attitudes towards his younger colleague at the University of Basel, embody a profound fear of the irrational. And Jacob Burckhardt too was a man of solitudes in a small and busied land.

Regionalism, satiric exasperation, aloneness are crucial to Swiss literature and critical thought. But both the evidence which literature offers, and the interpretation of such evidence, will be over-dramatized and, in certain regards, atypical. The writer may speak against the grain even when he bears close witness. Ten years are, as I have found, too short a time in which to get to know the palimpsest of Geneva societies, let alone those of Switzerland. My impressions as to the nature of "What is Swiss?" are only that. But two stand out.

If pressed, and if at all disposed to accede to an outsider's curiosity, a Swiss will tend to picture his ethos, his specific cultural-national identity, in concentric, interwoven circles. These have different foci. In a country innocent of war, of foreign occupation and of all but sporadic civil strife, families often know and inhabit their own unbroken descent. Locale, dialect, confession are long-preserved and informing. But so, as well, are the innumerable professional, military or para-military associations, sodalities, clubs to which the Swiss adhere, often with utmost gravamen, throughout their lives. No one who has not seen a local rifleman's fraternity on its way to compulsory practice will have any true sense of helvetic solidarities. Few *auberges* do not have their *Stammstisch* at which political, professional or athletic brethren gather in regular, close-knit conviviality. These inherited and elective affinities are the more or less discreet keys to the game of compromise and unspoken reciprocity in the Bern parliament and federal agencies.

But it is precisely the interwoven, many layered character of Swiss loyalties and self-recognition which determine a crucial abstinence from centrality. When discussing what might be the aptest title for a literary journal at the University of Geneva – not that Calvin's house inclines to such levities – my colleague Michel Büttor had an exact insight. It ought to be called, he said, *l'anti-centre*.

The second impression is altogether more speculative.

No other European community, and not many outside Europe, have known centuries of peace (the Napoleonic incursions were very brief), have known a comparable material prosperity and social tranquillity. There are ugly pockets of poverty, both rural and urban; there are times of economic recession in which the *frontalier* and the guest-worker are shown the door so as to mask unemployment statistics. But on the whole, and most particularly in this century of world wars, political terror and class-conflict, Switzerland has been uncannily spared. It has negotiated and benefited from a unique armistice with history.

To the believing Calvinist, this edenic dispensation confirms the promised election to grace. On a secular level, some such valuation may be felt by the Zürich patrician and banker who knows that most of the outside world, whatever its mutual hatreds and ideological differences, hastens, even at the cost of punitive negative interest, to deposit its monetary reserves in his keeping. But to other Swiss (certainly to the more thoughtful among my students) such self-satisfaction, however guarded, however austere its external manifestations, is no longer acceptable. The "sparing of Switzerland" – starving, hunted men and women gazed hopelessly past French and Nazi guards during the 1940s at that other part of the Geneva railway station where light, safety and food brimmed – is radically disquieting. What lies in wait for Switzerland after so exceptional a destiny of safety and of privilege? What lies in wait, some would add, after so long and often unquiet a selfishness? The syndrome, if one can use that modish word, is that of Henry James's "Beast in the Jungle". When, where will it leap? The form (encounter) in Geneva is one of "inverse pre-destination". Having been too long the very bastion of mundane benediction, Switzerland will be found out, fiercely. The grim plot about James's fable, of course, is that the noble beast never leaps.

I repeat these are the tentative impressions of a guest. It may be that what is *what* Swiss is not *what* the question.

Running like clockwork

P. K. O'Brien

JEAN-FRANÇOIS BERGIER
Histoire économique de la Suisse
376pp. Lausanne: Payot. Sw fr 55.
2 601 00441 X

Switzerland (that small, clean, stable, conservative and above all extremely rich country) continues to puzzle and excite the envy of larger, more powerful and conspicuously less fortunate neighbours. Why has the Swiss economy been so consistently successful over the past three centuries? How did the Swiss manage to create modern mechanized industry and to avoid the squalor and human misery associated with industrialization elsewhere in Europe? Why has Swiss society been so lightly afflicted by the great evils of our own century – war, inflation, strikes, ecological havoc and mass unemployment? How has Switzerland escaped the rigidities which have plagued the attempts of several other European nations to adjust their economies and work-forces to continuous and ever-increasing technological change?

These and other equally interesting questions will be provoked by Jean-François Bergier's *Histoire économique de la Suisse*. Not that Switzerland's most distinguished economic historian and current President of the International Economic History Association set out to write a book for the general reader. Although his work is engagingly illustrated and eminently readable, Bergier has produced a study for professional historians – complete with tables, maps, *tableau chronologique* and annotated bibliography. Nevertheless, as the best available synthesis of recent research in Swiss economic history, written by a scholar (educated at Lausanne, Paris and Oxford), who is widely and deeply read across long spans of European history and fully conversant with both the *Annales* and Anglo-Saxon approaches to his subject, Bergier's text must surely become the first and foremost source for anyone intrigued by the paradox of Switzerland.

That paradox has been with us for a long time and does indeed demand a historical inquiry into how a loosely federated polity – containing in 1798 a mere 1.68 million people, endowed with negligible mineral resources, no coal, rather limited supplies of low-quality agricultural land, mountainous, land-locked and vulnerable to political takeover by powerful neighbours on all its borders – managed to develop into a country which provides its citizens with the highest standard of living in Europe.

Concise stated, the general answer that might be drawn from Bergier's masterly survey is that for centuries before the industrial revolution, Switzerland's poor and limited supplies of agricultural land had impelled its residents into a continuous search for alternative ways of making and enlarging their livelihoods. Badly endowed with natural resources, too small and decentralized to expand by territorial conquest, the Swiss, slowly but effectively, accumulated physical and human capital. Initially, they acquired skills – notoriously as mercenaries and famously as merchants and financiers – and sold their scarce but valuable services to their neighbours in France, Italy, Germany and elsewhere. Remittances and booty from warfare and profits from commerce flowed back into the development of manufacturing industry in the valleys and plateaux of their alpine homeland. Towns grew to house the educated, thrifty and hard-working burghers and their families – prudentially limited in size from a very early date. Despised by aristocrats, dismissed by playwrights, the Swiss bourgeoisie resisted taxation and involvement with power politics, while soberly concentrating its efforts on building up the finance and mercantile houses of Geneva, Basel and Zürich, from where it organized networks of exchange with Britain, America, the Levant, as well as with central Europe.

By the latter half of the eighteenth century the presence of numerous towns of merchants engaged in long-distance trade, of what is nowadays referred to as proto-industrialization distinguished the Cantons of Switzerland as being among several regions of western Europe which had managed to escape, within

reducing their economic dependence on agriculture. Furthermore, by specializing in high-quality silks, linens and woollens, Swiss industry stood poised to move into the new fabric-cotton – and to take full advantage of opportunities for mechanization which appeared first in the textile industry; while their skills as watchmakers could also be harnessed and adapted into machine-making and engineering. Data cited by Bergier which suggest that 63 per cent of the work-force still remained in agriculture at the turn of the nineteenth century, may well be a misleading indicator of total labour time allocated to industrial and commercial activity and the share of agriculture in national income at that time. Decades before the French Revolution the Swiss countryside had been permeated by manufacturing and mercantile activity, and within that process of inter-sectoral exchange, agriculture itself had become specialized and thoroughly commercialized.

Over the first half of the nineteenth century (when Swiss industry confronted a succession of challenges from the mechanization of textile production in Britain), it responded with commendable zeal. As British (and French) machinery diffused into the spinning and weaving sections of cotton, linen, silk and wool production, Swiss entrepreneurs trained and re-deployed skilled workers from watch-making and other artisanal occupations into the construction of textile machinery. From that early development an embryo engineering industry came several distinctive Swiss contributions to nineteenth-century technology.

By mid-century, Switzerland not only led the world in the manufacture of clocks and watches, but, measured on a per capita basis, it had developed textile industries second only to Britain. To this reviewer what stands out from Bergier's fascinating chapters on the transition from proto to mechanized industry, is just how well prior historical developments had prepared Swiss manufacturing to take full advantage of technological breakthroughs made beyond its borders. Proto-industrialization, an industry before industry, had created a supply of skilled labour available at relatively low wages, because for a majority of families employment in manufacturing first supplemented and only gradually superseded income from farming. This persistent symbiosis between industry and agriculture survived mechanization and fostered small-scale, decentralized modes of organization, which happily preserved Switzerland from the cost and squalor of urban industrialization. A long history of mercantile development provided Swiss industry with access to capital at low rates of interest and entry to foreign, particularly French, markets for its textiles and watches. Swiss merchants cleverly exploited comparative advantages by catering for the upper end of world markets in textiles and the lower end in the case of watches and clocks. This latter development, based on a highly refined division of labour, effectively killed off the rival English industry.

Over the *Belle Époque*, 1850–1914, Swiss industry went on from strength to strength, adding new and world-famous product lines in chocolates, pharmaceuticals, shoes, locomotives, turbines and electrical machinery to the dominant traditions in textiles and watchmaking. Since 1914, structural adjustment has continued to mark its long-term development. In response to rapidly changing comparative advantages, capital and labour have been re-allocated from textiles and *horlogerie* (58 per cent of exports before the First World War) into engineering, metallurgy and chemicals (63 per cent of exports by the early 1980s); in achieving what emerges, in comparative perspective, as a smooth transition from old staples to new industry, the Swiss economy has been sustained by unusually cooperative trade unions, low taxes and a highly flexible structure of relatively small firms. Small is not only ecologically beautiful, but adaptable and efficient. Professor Bergier seems reluctant to attribute very much of his country's economic achievements to its neutrality in two world wars, although Swiss historians believe that war and continental blockade, from 1793–1815 gave Swiss industry the time it needed to adjust to the first British challenge. But then very few historians would be prepared to attribute their country's economic success to the political neutrality and isolation of potential rivals.

The would-be Romantic

John Warrack

CLIVE BROWN
Leviathan: A critical biography
360pp. Cambridge University Press. £30.
0 511 23990 7

No contemporary composer apart from Mendelssohn was so adulated by Victorian England as Spohr. His newest work was the sensation of any festival; his appearances turned into something of a royal progress; the preposterous "a dream – an ideal being – something intangible, wrapped in a cloud . . ."; and even the level-headed Maria Malibran was obliged to leave the platform in tears at the rehearsal of *The Last Judgment*. The trough into which his reputation fell on his death in 1859 has seemed the more engulfing as a result. Performances are scarce in this bicentenary year of his birth, though there are a few more recordings around; and Oxford and London have in recent years had the chance to see productions of *Jessonda* and *Faust*, both of them largely at the prompting of Clive Brown.

His excellent new study of Spohr's life and music is timely. Even in Spohr's own lifetime there were doubters among the adulators, and especially towards the end of his long career many of his sympathizers observed that he was beginning to repeat himself. The old master-servant whose wizardry had dazzled Europe fell back increasingly on the same devices he had pioneered in his *Violinschule*; and the composer whose chromatic harmony influenced Wagner found manner deteriorating into mannerism. There are passages in *Jessonda*

(Dr Brown cites one of the most striking) which look forward directly to *Tristan*; yet when detached from the dramatic motivation which it has in *Jessonda*, this kind of chromatic intensity becomes merely pathetic and sentimental.

Brown does not duck these issues, and his book is remarkably free from special pleading. He is, however, a little indulgent of the awkward disposition of arias in *Jessonda*; and in fastening on the pioneering use of motives in *Faust* (also remarked upon by the work's first conductor, Weber), he takes too easily for granted their actual effectiveness. *Faust* is a remarkable work in many ways, but it lacks the dramatic immediacy of Weber's own *Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*, works for which Spohr's respect was considerably tinged with jealousy. Certainly he envied Weber's popular touch, which he knew he lacked; and Brown's investigations into Spohr's English reception show that those who most admired him were aware of his appeal to "connoisseurs" or "amateurs" rather than the general public.

Yet there is much that deserves better than its present oblivion. For all those who enjoy the Nonet, a stray survivor among the chamber music, there must be many who would appreciate a good many of the other chamber works. One difficulty here is Spohr's devotion to the so-called *quatuor brillanti* tradition of quartet writing, a fruit of the Paris concerts which eagerly welcomed the latest visiting virtuoso such as Spohr himself and expected to hear him shine as the almost concerto-like soloist among his partners. Even Cherubini's quartets, fewer in number but generally more striking than Spohr's, have sunk with little trace; for the style cannot encompass the musical and emotional range of the great Viennese tradition first brought to maturity by Haydn.

Whether or not we are likely to see a revival of the symphonies and oratorios is a moot point. *Die letzten Dinge* (*The Last Judgment*) contains some splendid music; and Brown makes out an interesting case for *Des Heilands letzten Stunden*, the work which (as *Calvary*) swept Victorian England and which he claims as "the finest nineteenth-century treatment of the Passion". "Hélas!" one might add. Still, it could make a change from Mendelssohn's *Elljah*, to which Brown compares it.

As for the symphonies, for all Brown's measured claims, it does not seem that Spohr was very successful in treading a path between tradition and innovation, acknowledging as he did the classical norms of balance while infusing the medium with programmatic elements. *Die Weihe der Töne* certainly has some fine music in it; but the *Historical Symphony*, attempting to bring Baroque, Classical and "the Beethoven period" into the first three movements, flopped in the finale when Spohr's ironic treatment of all he loathed in "the modern period" mystified and annoyed his audiences. And Brown is reticent about *Irdisches und Menschliches im Menschenleben*, whose three movements, depicting "the child's world", "the age of passions" and "the final victory of the godly", are ambitiously laid out with a small orchestra representing the spiritual side of Man's nature and a full orchestra "identified with blind urges and uncontrolled passions".

It would take, one cannot help feeling, a better man than Spohr to cope with all that; indeed, a better man would not have touched it with a barge-pole. Spohr was a very talented composer caught between two worlds. He had the skill to write much effective, playable music in a wide variety of forms; he was also, within limits, exploratory, especially in his harmony. But he was really a classical composer trying to adapt to Romanticism, which he understood more with his critical head than his

composing heart. His use of programmes for symphonies, of novel forms for his concertos (such as the justly famous *Gesangszyne*, using an operatic scena as its basis and properly impressing the Italians on one of his tours), and of suitably Romantic or even shocking opera subjects (one of them involves necrophilia) cannot conceal the fact that he was not really Romantic by temperament. When he died, Brahms had just written his First Piano Concerto and Wagner was at work on *Tristan*; Germany was dividing into two musical camps, and there would have been room for Spohr in neither.

Here, surely, is to be found the reason for the excessive praise heaped on him, especially in England; for he suffered the fate of being embraced, in a highly conservative country, as the comfortable modernization of a tradition that was really in need of fundamental renewal. Nearer our own time, we have seen English adulation for Sibelius turn to scornful rejection before a more sensible understanding of the composer's actual achievement could be reached.

Spohr seems to have borne success and failure, domestic bliss and bereavement alike with stoicism and humour. Brown tells the story as clearly as he expounds the music, without always committing himself to a view. Spohr's character certainly included a measure of opportunism (as is evident in his dealings with Rochlitz, himself no mean operator, over the text of *Die letzten Dinge*), and also of self-dramatization: his account in his *Autobiography* of how he braved a storm at sea in order, like Turner, to get Nature at her wildest is clearly designed to impress posterity. Certainly the *Autobiography* remains a marvellously readable book. Similarly, unless he feels a work or part of a work to be a real failure, when he roundly says so, Dr Brown generally prefers to settle for exposition and clear, simple analysis. His final chapter sketches the sorry story of reaction and neglect; his book itself gives scholarly and intelligent voice to the more balanced view we are now beginning to achieve.

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Fighting off the pirates

Roy Porter

H. I. DUTTON
The Patent System and Inventive Activity During the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1853
232pp. Manchester University Press. £21.0719009979

Invention is the ghost in the machine of the Industrial Revolution; it beckons the captivated historian on, but then, as happens with ghosts, it proves a phantom, defying analytic grasp. Not surprisingly, for canny entrepreneurs were eager to keep inventions to themselves, secrets to be jealously guarded against industrial espionage. Small wonder then that such "mysteries" have rarely left much detail in the archives. And, sadder still for the researcher, there have been few Peppes among the inventors, conscientiously recording their moments of discovery on paper. When designing a canal, the heroic engineer Brindley would retire to bed, imagine his plans, and fix them in his head; he is probably more typical of the breed than James Watt, author of copious, doleful, self-justificatory outpourings.

How then are historians to plumb the mysteries of inventions? Patents may seem to offer a lead. For as faces are to souls, so patents are to inventions - visible emblems holding out promises of a key to the secret processes within. But of course, just like faces, patents are deceptive, and many scholarly fingers have been burnt through making the assumption that they are sure guides to the economic climate.

Things are more complicated than that. For one thing, by no means all inventions were patented. Many an industrialist preferred to put his trust in secrecy rather than gamble on the costly and precarious legal security against piracy which patenting promised. And, in any case, by no means all patents were for "inventions" as unambiguously "progressive" as Watt's steam-engine. True, by the Georgian century, patents had ceased to be the courtiers' monopolies and outsiders' privileges which they had been under Elizabeth and James I; yet many sealings remained "projects": equivocal, speculative, get-rich-quick bids to corner markets, bearing little kinship to whatever it was that unbound Prometheus.

Fortunately, Harold Dutton is alert to the dangers lurking in the need to scrutinize inventions through the distorting lens of patent law. He has produced a thoughtful re-examination of the issues involved in relating patenting to inventiveness, even if his monograph almost inevitably falls into two halves.

The first of these explores patents themselves. Mercifully, Dr Dutton spares us yet another guided tour of the protocol for registering patents, the minutiae of fees and specifications, and the familiar campaigns featuring Arkwright, Boulton and Watt, et al. Instead he tries a refreshing new tack, by examining public debates over the fate and future of the system: was it to be enlarged, scrapped, or reformed? Laissez-faire lobbies got patenting abolished in Switzerland and the Netherlands in the mid-nineteenth century. English political economists, by contrast, were rarely opposed to patents in principle (they were, after all, a mode of private property), and the resulting legislation of 1835 and 1852 actually consolidated the rights of patentees.

In acting thus, Dutton shows, Parliament was reflecting the verdicts of the courts and the mood of public opinion. For by then the vision of patentees as "Old Corruption" parasites, leeching on to the body economic, had largely been dispelled. It was becoming accepted that invention was the dynamo of progress, and hence that inventions deserved protection through statute and the courts. What is more, these legislative amendments both signalled and safeguarded the arrival of the professional inventor.

This arrival dominates the second part of the book. Through analysis of patentees and their sealings, Dutton shows that by the dawn of the Victorian age, the bulk of inventions were no longer coming from within the relevant industry, as the brainchildren of mechanics, but from outsiders, many of whom were "multiple patentees", registering improvements across a wide spectrum of processes ("diversifying their

portfolios", as Dutton puts it). Growing division of intellectual labour was thus generating the professional inventor (and his cousin, the patent agent), as one phase of what Harry Armatage styled "the rise of the technocrats".

Dutton brings these findings to bear on three conundrums about patents that have long taxed economic theorists and historians alike. First: what drove people to invent? The solution lies, he suggests, in the glint of personal profit. A swarm of technical experts was aiming to make a cut, a living even, out of inventing, men who grew adept in manipulating patent-law and exploiting the bargaining-power of patents via licensing, royalties, outright sale, or business partnerships - strategies which Dutton illuminates with case-studies. The point is well taken, though he might also have pondered that steady stream of "amateurs" for whom inventing became second nature, rather like doodling - Erasmus Darwin being a prime instance.

Next: what light does patenting throw on the interplay between economic need and inventiveness? Necessity, we know, is the mother of

As in the armouries

Eric Robinson

DAVID A. HOUNSHELL
From the American System to Mass Production 1800-1932: The development of manufacturing technology in the United States
411pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. \$37.50. 0801829755

David Hounshell's new book fully satisfies the appetite for it aroused by his brilliant essay entitled "The System: Theory and practice", which appeared in the report of a symposium on the American System of Manufactures (*Yankee Enterprise*, 1981). There he made some of the most precise and challenging statements in an excellent volume, writing, for example, that "until historians are willing to make this distinction between the broader expression, 'the American system of manufactures', and the more specific one, 'armory practice', the former will remain an imprecise and ambiguous phrase at best".

As Hounshell points out in his new book, when the British engineer, Joseph Whitworth, looked at a range of American manufactures in 1853, he saw mechanization rather than the "armory practice" of interchangeable parts as the characteristic of the "American system".

The subject of interchangeability had been a major interest of the 1854 Select Committee on Small Arms, but subsequently John Anderson and his Committee on the Machinery of the USA laid stress on "the adaptation of special tools to minute purposes", "the ample provision of workshop room", "systematic arrangement in the manufacture", "the progress of material through the manufactory" and "the discipline and sobriety of the employed". In a chapter on "The American System in the Antebellum Period", Hounshell describes how the production of interchangeable parts in the arms industry was only very slowly realized, at great expense, for limited production-runs and in response to military demands. In the manufacture of such things as pins, clocks or barrels, and in other traditional handicraft industries, interchangeability was of much less consequence though these industries were transformed by the introduction of specialized machines.

Armory practice was introduced into some of the sewing-machine firms: in the Wheeler and Wilson Manufacturing Company, after William Perry, who had been trained in Colt's armory at Hartford, joined the firm in 1857. In the Willcox and Gibbs Sewing Machine Company from its inception in 1858, because all the machine-tools, as well as the earliest models of the sewing-machines themselves, were made by the famous company of Brown and Sharpe of Rhode Island, Singers, however, by far the most successful firm, made its sewing-machines throughout the 1850s and 1860s entirely by European methods, with general machine-tools and a great deal of

invention; but Dutton queries the view that production bottlenecks automatically brought inventions into being in response. For inventions increasingly came from outside experts with an eye to the main chance, who were not so much meeting needs as anticipating openings.

And last: did patenting ultimately help or hinder industrial transformation? The patent system should not be regarded (Dutton justly concludes) as an independent force, accelerating or retarding, but rather as a medium. Patent law proved a flexible resource to be adroitly manipulated by inventors. The device's availability helped make inventing worth while and spurred technical talent. Thus, at one remove, the patent system facilitated the quickening of technology.

Dr Dutton has not aimed to be all-embracing, and certain questions clearly need further consideration (how for example did the growing diffusion of science influence the pace of patenting?) Yet overall, his book offers a stimulating and judicious reassessment of the role of patenting in the first century of industrialization.

handwork, employing hundreds of fitters. Indeed, Singers' decision to open a factory in Scotland was largely dictated by the availability of a large labour force of skilled and, by American standards, cheap fitters. The Singer Company gradually and painfully evolved a blend of the European and American systems but never achieved absolute interchangeability. As far as sewing-machines were concerned, Singers gained their success largely through their marketing methods.

Having disposed of one myth, Hounshell then turns his attention to the McCormick Reaper factory, where armory practice was not introduced until about 1880, the company having previously relied on skilled blacksmiths, machinists and woodworkers. Cyrus McCormick himself spent his time constantly devising improvements to his reapers so that changes were required every season and the customers came to demand the very latest models. Because of these changes and his methods of production McCormick could never catch up with the demand. The factory was run by Leander McCormick, who was extremely conservative; in 1880 he was replaced by a Mr Wilkinson, who taught Cyrus McCormick Jr the rudiments of armory practice and helped to revolutionize the company. The mechanical reaper industry had thus been weakened by introducing the American system, despite the reputation it later acquired as a symbol of that system.

The bicycle industry in America grew out of New England experience in the manufacture of small-arms and sewing machines, and sometimes took over the premises of these earlier enterprises. The largest maker of bicycles, the Weed Sewing Machine-Pope Manufacturing Company, employed armory practice from the first and announced that its bicycles, unlike their British counterparts, would be made of machine-produced interchangeable parts. Few innovations were made, however, until the introduction of Elihu Thompson's electric resistance welding. What did become important was the hold-ups in production caused by painting and assembly, a problem which antedated that faced by Ford in the automobile industry.

Hounshell recognizes Ford as the pioneer of mass-production, for all his borrowings from Taylorism or earlier manufacturers. He devotes some hundred pages of his book to a detailed, sometimes rather congested analysis of Ford's mass-production techniques and the problems which arose when they were obliged to switch to flexible mass-production, to create a wider range of models in a variety of styles. Here, the economic historian has to struggle to understand engineering processes - but, as throughout the book, the reader is helped to do so by the excellent illustrations and diagrams.

The book has few misprints, is clearly and handsomely produced, and, most important, reflects a lively and inquiring mind. It is probably the best book on the history of technology to have been published in English this year.

At the local level

David Cannadine

THEODORE HOPPEN
Electoral, Politics and Society in Ireland 1832-1885
280pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £29.50. 0198246306

"Every time the English thought they had found the answer, the Irish changed the question." Thus the authors of *1066 and All That*, in what remains the best single-sentence summary of what we call England's Irish Problem, but which, across the water, they refer to as Ireland's English Problem. Either way, what was true for England's nineteenth-century politicians has also been true for Ireland's nineteenth-century historians. For every time it seems that the right answer has been found, some historian merely replies that the wrong question has been asked, and that it is time to go back to the drawing-board. The real question about nineteenth-century Irish history is, quite simply: what is the question?

Once upon a time, the historiography of the recent Irish past was dominated by the heroic nationalist view, in which the struggle for land and the struggle for freedom were but different aspects of the same problem. On the one side were the wicked, rapacious, absentee landlords, supported by a repressive, ignorant and unsympathetic British government, obsessed with the Union and determined to uphold the Protestant Ascendancy. And on the other were the unbowed natives and exploited tenantry, who kindled the sacred flames of national aspiration and individual ownership, and who fanned these fires of freedom into a blaze which vanquished both the Irish landlords and the British government for ever.

In the past twenty years, all this has changed. The landlords have been rehabilitated, and their reputations (if not also their estates) have largely been restored: they were not excessively absentee; they did spend money on quite substantial improvements; they did not charge exorbitant rents; they evicted tenants very rarely, and they only disappeared because Gladstone was so foolish as to accept the contemporary radical critique of their position as truth, when it was merely propaganda. And, at the same time, the dimensions and aspirations of popular protest movements have also been revised, if anything in the opposite direction: much of it was backward-looking and millennialist rather than forward-looking and nationalist; the struggle for land and the struggle for freedom were not necessarily the same thing; and even such ostensibly national movements as the Land League were riven by conflict, dissension and disagreement.

It is a measure of Theodore Hoppen's outstanding study that he assimilates yet casts doubt on many of these old faiths and new departures in Irish historiography. And he does so by writing a book of unusual range and scope: it takes the whole of Ireland, over a relatively long time span, from O'Connell to Parnell. It looks at the formal structure of the political system - elections, constituencies,

parties - subjects which have been rather ignored in the recent gush of studies of estate management and popular protest. It also investigates the functioning of the political process: elections and riots, landlords and priests, and the rise and fall of political parties. And it further relates all this to the broader themes of economic change and social development.

But to what purpose? Hoppen's fundamental argument is beguilingly simple. Throughout this period, he suggests, the chief characteristic of Irish political life was that it was complex, fragmented and localized. And the only way to demonstrate this convincingly is to give as many examples and illustrations as possible: which, for over 400 pages, is precisely

and their influence on elections was probably less great and less uniform than has often been allowed. And, for them as for most others, the problems and the personalities of community politics were what mattered most: there was a vast gap between the particular realities of local political life and the rhetoric and issues of the national political scene. In this period, Hoppen asserts, Irish political history was the history of the parish pump, and it has never been so well primed nor so well painted as in this book.

To make things even more complicated, Hoppen is also well aware that these particular realities must be seen alongside long-term social, political and economic developments which were themselves by no means all



William John Leech's "The Green Room" (1908), reproduced from *The Irish Impressionists: Irish artists in France and Belgium, 1850-1914* by Julian Campbell (280pp. National Gallery of Ireland. £22.0903162172).

what Hoppen does. He begins with a masterly study of the franchise, the voters, the constituencies and of corruption, and shows how hard it is to generalize about anything or any group. And he follows this with an equally impressive survey of the landed class as the ruling elite. Again, generalizations are difficult: they varied in the size and wealth of their estates, in the degree of their political participation, in their religion and in their treatment of their tenants (though Hoppen generally concludes that they were rather less benevolent than recent revisionist work might suggest).

The other features of Irish political life were equally fragmented. The Catholic Church, for instance, was by no means a monolithic bloc; the prelates and the parish priests were worlds apart in experience and outlook; their political preferences varied widely and unpredictably;

in the same inexorable direction. After the famine, the labourers and artisans declined, while the shopkeepers and farmers advanced, and the landlords were both thinned out and strengthened. The Liberal Party largely disintegrated by the 1880s, as it was superseded by the Nationalists; but the Tory Party remained intact, and was soon to re-emerge as a vehicle of revived and strident Unionism. On the whole, Irish society was modernizing: there were better communications, improved literacy, a national press and a more efficient postal service. But in many ways, these developments had little effect: at the end, as at the beginning, Irish politics remained fundamentally fragmented and disparate.

Thus to bring together the structures and substance of Irish political, social and economic life is a remarkable achievement, and the implications of these findings are profound and

significant. In the first place, this book is a powerful attack on those scholars who have recently stressed the weaknesses and divisions in such national movements as the Land League. For if Hoppen is right in his contention that the norm in Irish politics was localism, then it is the unity and breadth of the Land League which stands out as its most dominant and novel characteristic. By taking both a broader perspective and a longer view, Hoppen presents the League in a very different light from that which has been most recently fashionable.

And there is a further argument, which has even broader implications. For Hoppen suggests that, after the heyday of the Land League and the Nationalist Movement in the 1880s, Irish politics once more reverted to its customary, traditional and essential localism, only once again interrupted by the national traumas of 1918-21. And, he suggests, it was this localism, rather than the occasional bursts of national activity, which had the greater influence on Ireland's subsequent development, not least because it was actually fostered by the British, whose land legislation helped to create a nation of socially conservative small proprietors which has lasted until our own day. So, Hoppen concludes, while there may be linear progress in the economic and social development of Irish life, in politics the wheels merely revolve and return to the same place.

No brief summary can do adequate justice to the range and riches of this remarkable book. It has, of course, its problems. It is not, despite the author's witty and attractive prose, an easy read; it takes for granted a very detailed knowledge of Irish history and historiography; the argument that everything was complex, local and varied necessarily requires an almost suffocating weight of example and illustration; this makes the shortage of summaries and signposts all the more regrettable; and it is a pity that the essence and implications of the author's findings are not spelt out more explicitly.

But these are relatively minor quibbles. As a piece of scholarship, this is an awesome achievement: Hoppen has read everything in print on the subject; the long list of archive sources consulted is almost beyond belief; the authority of his scholarship stands forth on every page; and the result is the most important book to have appeared on modern Irish history in a decade or more. Without doubt, it will change fundamentally the way we look at the subject, both in terms of the questions posed and the answers offered.

The Bishopric of Derry and the Irish Society of London 1602-1705, Volume II: 1670-1705, edited by T. W. Moody and the late J. G. Simms (580pp. Dublin: Stationery Office for the Irish Manuscripts Commission. £32) follows *Volume I* (1968) in recording, in documentary depth and detail, continuous disputes between the bishops and the City of London's managing body for its Ulster property, particularly over fisheries and lands on the Foyle, leading to a constitutional confrontation between Irish and English Houses of Lords (1697-1700).

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Getting acquainted

A. J. Ayer

BERTRAND RUSSELL
Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript
 Edited by Elizabeth Ramsden Eames and
 Kenneth Blackwell
 258pp. Allen and Unwin. £35.
 004920079

In undertaking to review this book, I have to declare a slight interest. Macmaster University, which has acquired Bertrand Russell's archives, is producing, under the overall title of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, a critical edition of all Russell's shorter writings, including those which have been previously published, together with "his unpublished book-length manuscripts". The edition, which is expected to run to at least twenty-eight volumes, is under the control of an editorial board, with the aid of an advisory board of which I am a member. This constitutes my interest. Having declared it, I may add that I had no hand in the compilation of this volume.

In their foreword to *Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript*, the members of the Editorial Board describe it as "the only book-length work on epistemology that Russell left unpublished in its original form". This is not strictly accurate. The manuscript in Macmaster's possession begins at a page numbered 143, and the editors offer good reasons for their view that the missing early portion of the manuscript supplied the material for six articles which Russell published in the American journal *The Monist* at various dates between January 1914 and April 1915. These articles, of which the first three were grouped in *The Monist* under the heading of "The Nature of Acquaintance", the fourth is concerned with questions of methodology, the fifth with the difference between sensation and imagination and the sixth with our experience of time, are reproduced as the first six chapters of the present volume and constitute about two-fifths of the text. Chapters 7 to 9, which complete the first part of the book, are respectively entitled "On the Acquaintance Involved in Our Knowledge of Relations", "Acquaintance with Predicates" and "Logical Data". The second part, which is divided into seven chapters, offers among other things an account of our understanding of propositions, a discussion of self-evidence and a theory of truth. It ends abruptly after a chapter on degrees of certainty.

We are informed that the reason for its abrupt ending and also for Russell's failure to publish the last three chapters of the first part of the manuscript or any of its second part was Wittgenstein's criticism of their content. This explanation is supported by a letter which Russell wrote to Lady Ottoline Morrell some time in 1916, which is reproduced in the second volume of Russell's *Autobiography*. It contains a passage in which Russell reminds her of his having written "a lot of stuff about Theory of Knowledge; which Wittgenstein criticized with the greatest severity". He goes on to speak of this criticism as "an event of first-rate importance" in his life and as having affected everything he had done since. "I saw he was right and I saw that I could not hope ever again to do fundamental work in philosophy." He confesses that he was "filled with utter despair", characteristically adding in a footnote in the *Autobiography*, "I soon got over this mood". Later on he writes, "I had to produce lectures for America, but I took a metaphysical subject although I was and am convinced that all fundamental work in philosophy is logical. My reason was that Wittgenstein persuaded me that what was wanted doing in logic was too difficult for me." This combined with the war in diverting Russell's attention to social questions and led to his delivering the series of lectures which were published in 1916 under the title, *Principles of Social Reconstruction*.

The lectures which Russell had to produce for America were the Lowell lectures which he delivered in Boston in March and April 1914 and published later in that year under the title of *Our Knowledge of the External World*, with the sub-heading "As a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy". They are metaphysical only in so far as this term may be taken to embrace conceptual analysis. The account which Russell gives in his *Autobiography* of his having dictated them off the cuff in January 1914 is at least misleading. We are provided with evidence that he had composed a first draft by the previous September. They owe much less to Wittgenstein than to A.N. Whitehead, Russell's collaborator in *Principia Mathematica*, making use of techniques employed by Whitehead in his books *The Principles of Natural Knowledge* and *The Concept of Nature*, published respectively in 1919 and 1920 and unduly neglected, even by those who have claimed to model their philosophy on his.

How quickly Russell recovered from Wittgenstein's onslaught is shown by his having delivered the Herbert Spencer Lecture at Oxford in November 1914 on "Scientific Method in Philosophy" besides publishing essays on "Mysticism and Logic" and "The Relation of Sense-data to Physics" in the same year and an essay in 1915 on "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter". All four pieces were reprinted in the collection entitled *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays*. It is not even true that he gave up the technical pursuit of logic. His *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, which he wrote while serving a prison sentence for libelling the American army, was indeed intended to be popular, but the eight lectures entitled *Philosophy of Logical Atomism* which he delivered in London in 1918 and published in the following year cover much the same ground as the second part of the 1913 manuscript, which had been the main target of Wittgenstein's criticism. He was not deterred from writing an *Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, though admittedly it was not one that satisfied the author; and the *Introduction to the second edition of Volume I of Principia Mathematica*, which came out in 1925, displays no weakening of his logical grasp.

Philosophically, the main point of interest in the first part of the present publication lies in Russell's handling of neutral monism, the theory, adopted by Ernest Mach and later by William James, that the categories of mind and matter are not fundamental. Both are constructed out of the same neutral stuff, called sensations by Mach and experience by James. One and the same neutral element can help to constitute a mind and a physical object,

according as it is a member of two series, respectively conforming to different laws. In his *Problems of Philosophy* (1912), an admirable introductory book, disdained by Wittgenstein as "a shilling shocker", Russell had upheld a representative theory of perception, maintaining that we were directly acquainted with sense-data and that the existence and properties of physical objects could be inferred from the character of the sense-data which they caused. In *Our Knowledge of the External World* and the relevant essays reprinted in *Mysticism and Logic* he draws closer to neutral monism, treating physical objects no longer as the external causes of sense-data but as constructible out of them.

The same applies to the book under review. Its first part does indeed contain a chapter in which neutral monism is explicitly rejected, but only as a theory of the mind. The reason for this is that Russell still adhered to an analysis of sensation according to which a subject, not necessarily persisting beyond the mental act, stood in a relation of acquaintance with a sense-datum, the whole complex of subject-experiencing-object being itself a possible object of direct experience. By 1921, when he published *The Analysis of Matter*, he had ceased to take such a literal view of mental acts, and consequently adopted the neutral monist theory of the mind. But by 1925, when he published *The Analysis of Matter*, he had reverted to a representative theory of perception which he continued to maintain. My own view is that these alternatives are not exhaustive. I no longer believe that physical objects are constructible out of actual and possible sense-data, in the way that the neutral monists supposed, but I do think that sense-data, or qualia as I now prefer to call them, can be shown to provide a basis with respect to which our belief in physical objects functions as a theory. As for the mind, I agree with the neutral monists in rejecting any analysis in terms of subject act and object, though I have yet to hit upon a satisfactory theory of personal identity which is framed wholly in terms of particular items of experience and the relations between them.

In the 1913 manuscript Russell was content to explain our understanding of general terms as arising out of our acquaintance with universals, and accordingly allowed predicates to figure in the "logical inventory of the world". Drawing the line at admitting false propositions into this inventory, he treated propositions as "incomplete symbols", analysing them at their simplest into a quintet consisting of the understanding by a subject of a complex of two terms related in a given mode or direction. The proposition was true if such a complex existed, false if it did not. Self-evidence, which was taken to be the basis of knowledge, was defined, perhaps too simply, as "a property of judgements, consisting in the fact that, in the same experience with themselves, they are accompanied by acquaintance with their truth".

The authors of the introduction to this volume supply a detailed account of its provenance, but do not venture upon any serious appreciation of its philosophical content.

Future commitments

Geoffrey Warnock

MICHAEL H. ROBINS
Promising, Intending, and Moral Autonomy
 180pp. Cambridge University Press. £20.
 0521260760

To make a promise is a familiar enough performance, but nevertheless can quite easily come to seem deeply perplexing. It can, for example, come to seem irrational; how could it be rational to bind oneself to do some specific thing in the future, without regard to what the circumstances may be at the future time? But Michael Robins concerns himself with the more basic question, not whether promising is rational, but how it is possible at all. How can just saying something – "I promise" – conjure into existence a real obligation, where no obligation was before? How can a moral relationship be substantively changed, merely in virtue of one's announced intention that it should be? Can mere words, or the will, make real changes? It looks like magic; and it can seem, as it did to Hume, a sort of superstition to think that such a thing can be done.

Where does the obligation come from? Not, Professor Robins argues, from the "expectations" of a second party; for I may lead you, even quite deliberately, to expect that I – or for that matter someone else – will act in a certain way, without entitling you to demand that I or anyone else should so act. Nor is it explanatory to invoke a "rule of the game" by which promising "counts as", or constitutes, being obliged; that would bind only someone who had agreed (promised!) to play that game according to the rules. Nor is promise-keeping just a particular case of "fair dealing"; fairness might require me to promise (if I have reaped the benefit of promises made to me), but if I have promised, it is not just fairness that demands performance.

What we need, Robins holds, is "a primitive concept of commitment", independent of and antecedent to promising, out of which full-blown promising can, without circularity, be constructed in theory – and could also, as he suggests, have evolved in practice. He finds this in the notion of *intending*, even of action itself. For if, as an agent capable of intentional action, I intend to act, I am simply thereby "committed" in a certain way with respect to my own future: if I intend to X, it cannot be for me a completely open question whether I shall X or not, and anything other than X-ing by me will be "out of order", unless, of course, I

change my mind; but even that is not just open to my whim – if I non-arbitrarily intended to X, I cannot just arbitrarily, without reason or explanation, subsequently choose not to.

Now this primitive "commitment", Robins argues, can in various degrees be strengthened. I may not merely intend, but *decide*, or *resolve* – that is, intend to act, and intend not to change my mind, or even to risk doing so through reconsidering the question. I may also "vow" – which Robins defines, surely eccentrically, as just like resolving, except that there need have been no consideration of alternative courses of action. In this way I can, of my own will, impose quite strong "requirements" on my own future conduct. The crucial step comes when we add "the social dimension"; this consists not just in declaring, making public, my intention, decision, or "vow", but in transferring the requirement on my conduct to the custody (so to speak) of another person. If I do so I make a promise, specifically to him.

The nub is, of course, what is this "transferring"? According to Robins it is intending, and saying so to a second party, that that party should "hold the exclusionary requirement" for me to act in a specified way at some future time. That may sound like magic; how can my saying that I intend him to hold such a right make it the case that he *does* hold it? But no, says Robins – it is not my saying that commits me, but my intending; and that can unmagically commit me (as intended) since, as he claims that we have seen, all intending does.

But can that be right? If this complex announced intention commits me also at intending does, it presumably commits me at intending does – that is, *unless I change my mind*. (I may indeed intend not to, but I may also change my mind about that!) The crux for Robins seems to be that my intentions, including my announced complex intentions, must remain in principle revocable by me – exactly what a promise is supposed not to be. But his efforts to get off that hook are well sustained and worth studying.

In conclusion Robins makes a rather perfunctory attempt to maintain that "commitment" underlies moral rights and wrongs in general. He makes this look plausible, not surprisingly, in certain cases involving acceptance of, and engagement in, co-operative practices for common ends. But is, say, cruelty by me objectionable only if, and only because, I have in some sense or other "undertaken" not to act cruelly? He does not seriously try to argue that.

With the help of the fairies

Pat Rogers

J. KENT CLARK
Goodwin Wharton
 391pp. Oxford University Press. £15.
 0192122347

If he has a place in history, then Goodwin Wharton (1653–1704) belongs among the great troupe of the miscast. Max Beerbohm said of Prunty's Caroline that fate intended her for a tragic role, but she insisted on playing it in tights. Wharton was meant for an Albany, but wanted to play the Fool: with the attributes of an Epicure Mammon (credulity, vanity, social ambition), he constantly auditions for the part of Subtle. A younger son, he ought to have been content with the minor political jobs he was eventually offered – MP for some undemanding borough like Malmesbury, a poccourantist term as Lord of the Admiralty, a few spells of making himself useful as chairman of Commons committees. For Wharton, these things were not enough. He saw a nobler destiny for himself; he had a vision not just of greatness, but heavenly vistas of supernal power. For was he not in touch with the fairy world, equipped with a hot line to the angels?

Goodwin was a member of the prominent Buckinghamshire family, three of whose number in successive generations have left more of a mark. His father was "the good Lord Wharton", Parliamentarian colonel and chronic dogger. His elder brother was Thomas Wharton (mostly styled "Tom" throughout this book), Junto politician, borough-winger and arch-fiend in Swift's fantasy of Whig diabolism. His nephew was the unstable Jacobite rake, Philip, first Duke of Wharton. "Nature well known, no prodigies remain," Comets are regular, and Wharton plain" – Pope's lines rebound on Goodwin, for compared to his uncle, Philip was the embodiment of sanity and middle-class sobriety.

Till now Goodwin has lived under the shadow of his kinsmen, allowed an odd couplet in

Poems on Affairs of State, his confessional autobiography left undisturbed in the British Library manuscript room. J. Kent Clark has changed all that, and retailed at length Goodwin's strange doings and maniacal notions. There is a dark allusion, indeed, to the author's "extended discussion" of certain matters in his "uncut biography of Goodwin Wharton", nesting in the Huntington Library: the epithet employed suggests that some of Goodwin's desire to swell a minor life into an epic quest may have spread to his chronicler. There is an ominous sense that the author wants us to let Goodwin read for the hero's role, despite the fact that in everything except power of self-delusion he was one of nature's bit-part players.

The story is not very complicated, though pecked with a sort of frantic bathos. Wharton had started out with the commonplace misadventures of the age and his own time of life – nothing more than ruinous projects in fire-fighting, deep-sea diving and treasure-seeking. But he never became a really front-ranking projector, though he ran briefly into Thomas Neale and went into diving equipment the very same year as another notable investor, Daniel Defoe. However, some time before 1680 Goodwin became an adept, and thereafter he turned to the occult for a solution of his various financial, familial and sexual troubles. Drawn to alchemy, hospitable to quick answers, overstrained nervously and (probably) unbalanced from birth, he was a willing gull for the first plausible con-artist he should encounter. This turned out to be Mary Parish.

Clark's introduction of this lady is a little more mouth-filling: "Her name was Mary Tenson Boucher Lawrence Parish. She was one of the most imaginative and versatile women that England has ever produced." Actually, that wasn't her name, or at least no contemporary could have made sense of this nomenclature. And as for imaginative and versatile, it depends on how you assess these qualities. Her first skill lay in convincing Wharton that she was regularly conceiving children by him, who mysteriously aborted themselves or otherwise

failed to materialize. Goodwin was persuaded to the very end, and when she died at seventy-two he believed she was pregnant for the one hundred and seventh time (Professor Clark's tally, but who is counting?) On top of this, she was able to reveal to Wharton a whole buried "lowland" world, that is Middle Earth with a full royal establishment and a nerve centre outside the terrestrial capital.

The entrance to their principal realm was located on the third heath northwest of Hounslow. It was here that Mary had . . . called to the fairies "to come out if they were there . . ." The entrance at Hounslow was "a kind of door", perfectly concealed in the earth. Beneath it lay a spiral path which led down to a level plain, upon which stood the elegant palace with its many marble-paved courts.

This sounds dauntingly like the underpass on the way to Terminal 3 at Heathrow, but Goodwin was convinced of the reality of this fiery cell, despite any number of disappointments over the next few years. Nothing ever quite turned out as promised, the buried treasure remained obstinately buried, the marks of royal favour failed to manifest themselves.

Anyone less credulous than Goodwin would have given up in no time. He persevered for year after fruitless year, satisfied that Mary (who was liable to die and then not to have died after all) was a gentlewoman despite her poverty and humble surroundings, indeed one "directly descended from the blessed Virgin Mary". As she was driven to fake cruder and cruder psychic happenings, we move into a world less of hobbits than of Mr Sludge the medium. Goodwin started to depend on his angelic voices, and managed to persuade himself that many of the greatest ladies in the land, from Mary of Modena downwards, were desperately in love with him.

In 1688 he was on the right side for once, and some convenient deaths in the family brought him a measure of worldly advancement. But he naturally assumed that the new queen would ditch her consort William in his favour, and then he joined the calamitous Brest expedi-

tion. Mary was getting old, and even Goodwin occasionally wondered whether her record in terms of delivering the promised riches and power was, well, altogether encouraging. In his lucid intervals he could just play in octaves with life, but he could never get into full unison. He had partial success with a marine salvage operation off Tobemorey, but the spirit world did not come up with the magic diving-suit they had under patent, and so this venture folded too. At last Mary died in reality, and Goodwin was left alone with his voices.

Clark tells the story with abundant detail, and some over-documentation of small points. Some of the writing is dreadfully lame and there is a fondness for whimsical or loosely allusive chapter titles. More seriously, the author has chosen to adopt Goodwin's version of events, so that he allows the narrative to register surprise at the repeated failures and broken promises. This produces some nice local effects of irony, along the lines of "Unaccountably, the box was empty", but it palls as a sustained manner of report. It also allows Clark never quite to judge Goodwin, and to let his imputed heroism stand unmoled. There is a hidden implication that Wharton was on the side of a certain creative stream of occult enquiry, but actually all the book shows is a woolly-minded adventurer who was greedy enough to bypass the normal routes which his class had to achieve power. His compelling inner voice might have something to do with his Calvinist background, but if so Clark does not enforce the connection – in fact, we are told very little of Goodwin's first thirty years, and it is hard to be sure whether his psychical researches went back to his own psychic history. In default of such a clue, Goodwin remains marginal to the great events of his time, even those which hinge on religion and the decline of magic. All that this book does is earn him admission to the brotherhood of heroic failures, and that is a category (like mock-epic) where the adjective suffers a semantic collapse when we reach the noun.

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Post-institutional

Charles Townshend

IVERACH McDONALD
The History of The Times
Volume V, Struggles in war and peace 1939-1966
514pp. Times Books. £20.
0723002622

The Times is more than a newspaper; it is a national institution. So, at least, it has always been believed. The Monopolies Commission, discussing the proposed takeover by Lord Thomson in 1966, dissented from this orthodoxy. "We do not accept that the role of *The Times* is in any way special." At the time this view was rather shocking; today it is not so. When *The Times* ceased publication in April 1955 for the first time in its 150-year history, because of an industrial dispute (involving other members of the NPA, not itself), many were incredulous. Now we know that it can shut down for weeks, for months, maybe for ever, and the fabric of British society will not instantly disintegrate. To this extent the history presented in this volume is a story of decline. Its author, the long-serving *Times* journalist and former foreign editor, Iverach McDonald, strives valiantly to maintain a buoyant tone. But a wan, apologetic air persistently wafts over the enterprise. It makes a perceptible contrast with the curt confidence of the first four volumes, com-

pleted in 1952 by the typographer Stanley Morison. The period encompassed by its anodyne subtitle overlaps with the postscript to Volume Four, and in fact goes back some way beyond the termination of Morison's "formal and critical narrative" at the outbreak of war. Then, under Geoffrey Dawson, the paper's role was unquestionably special. It had a special relationship with the political establishment, and was regarded across the world as the semi-official voice of the British government.

Neither government nor newspaper regarded this reputation as desirable. It led Dawson's espousal of appeasement to impact directly on diplomatic negotiations. McDonald squares up to the "big mistake" unflinchingly; indeed his hostility to appeasement is so strong that the non-judgmental stance he successfully (almost too successfully) maintains through the rest of the book falters here. He quotes, dutifully rather than approvingly, Dawson's argument that appeasement ensured that, when war came, its necessity was fully accepted by public opinion. Like other anti-appeasers he seems unwilling to grasp the force of this point in relation to total war. Yet his treatment of Suez later in the book graphically demonstrates the danger of precipitate action modelled on the supposed lessons of 1938.

The most remarkable phase of *The Times*'s history since 1939 was the editorship of Barrington-Ward and his assistant E. H. Carr. Moving his paper dramatically away from its

establishment position, Barrington-Ward campaigned for social regeneration in Britain and for a non-ideological attitude towards Russia. In both spheres he predictably fell foul of Churchill, and in the second, less predictably, of Ernest Bevin. The truly awful story of Bevin's assault on Barrington-Ward for his lack of patriotism and his failure to control his "pink intelligentsia" is presented with suitably repellent effect here. McDonald could, indeed, have made even more of the consistency of the paper's view of eastern Europe in both pre and post-war periods.

The premature death of Barrington-Ward and the non-succession of Donald Tyerman (which is passed over with, one feels, too loud a silence in this volume) brought *The Times* to a phase that was noticeably duller. McDonald's account reflects this, coming to feel more like a house record than a general analysis, and developing a lumpy texture in its efforts to achieve comprehensiveness. Much of this has to do with the qualities of Sir William Haley. Some of these were remarkable, in particular his powers of work. Most readers will be duly awed by the story of his return to the office one Sunday afternoon, looking "as if he had just come in from two health-giving days on the moor", but having spent his short weekend reading seven books and reviewing four of them. But editorially his conservative liberalism was a pale contrast to Barrington-Ward's intense Tory radicalism. His attitude during

the *Lady Chatterley* trial was well caught, both aurally and morally, in the mocking phrase "Halter than thou".

McDonald quotes with apparent approval Beaverbrook's remark that Haley was at last "turning *The Times* into a newspaper". But the outsider who hopes to penetrate into the hermetic value-system of journalists will get little guidance. Some discussion of layout was obviously unavoidable in dealing with the epic shift of news to the front page in 1966, but the views of editors and others on the important question of anonymity are merely recorded without comment or evaluation. Many readers will be left wondering how the belief in maintaining an objective "journal of record" could be squared with the relentless need to keep the news interesting and to deny that there could be dull days. How does the pursuit of truth square with the pursuit of profit? The answer is, obviously, with great difficulty. The long-drawn-out crisis of identity marched with commercial crisis for *The Times*. The failure of the *News Chronicle* showed that an equally "vital" political institution could vanish through mere financial inefficiency. For the *Chronicle* there was no appeal from this unconstitutional tribunal.

This volume ends in 1966, with a short epilogue scanning the Thomson-Murdoch years. The horrors of the journalists'-strike of 1980 are mentioned; but the story of the Hitler diaries will have to await another historian.

Chief of mischief

Rudolf Klein

LOGAN GOURLAY (Editor)
The Beaverbrook I Knew
272pp. Quartet. £11.95.
0704323311

Press Lords fascinate. But few Press Lords are fascinating. Lord Beaverbrook was perhaps the great exception. Writing about him, twenty years and more after leaving his employment, one still falls effortlessly into the clipped rhythm of his voice; a voice which shaped the style, just as it directed the content, of the Beaverbrook press. For unlike the *Murdochs*, *Maxwells* and *Matthews* of our day, Beaverbrook was a great creator. In the newspapers he owned – the *Daily* and *Sunday Express*, the *London Evening Standard* – he created a world in his own image whose every inhabitant was a creature dependent on him. It was some consolation for him, I suppose, for his failure to make any impact on the larger world of politics, his first ambition when he came to Britain before the 1914 war as a self-made Canadian millionaire. If he could not influence the real world – if his every political campaign, as he admitted, turned out to be a fiasco – at least he had his own private circus, where he was proprietor, ringmaster and chief performer.

In this volume, the clowns and high-wire men who, like myself, performed for him at one time or another, look back on their days in the Beaverbrook circus. The performers, it must be admitted, were a remarkable lot. They included Michael Foot and Barbara Cartland, the present Editors of *The Times* and the *Sunday Mirror*, as well as an anthology of Fleet Street names like James Cameron and Anne Sharpley. It could hardly be a more diverse lot. Yet they share a common obsession with their subject. It is as though, for most of them, Beaverbrook is a ghost to be exorcised. And the form of this exorcism – which makes this so readable a book – is an attempt to make some sense of Beaverbrook and, by making sense of him, to explain to themselves their own willingness to work for him.

It is a willingness which needs some justification. The Beaverbrook Press, as created by the first Baron, was in many ways quite dreadful. It is not so much that the three newspapers pursued silly causes like Empire Free Trade and conducted boring vendettas against the Arts Council and the National Trust. No one in this book even tries to examine Beaverbrook's ideas or policies. If, in the words of the dust-jacket, the aim is to capture the "essence of the man", then the presumption must be that the causes and campaigns pursued by Beaver-

Covering the President

Colin Seymour-Ure

JAMES DEAKIN
Straight Stuff: The reporters, the White House and the truth
378pp. New York: Morrow. \$17.95.
0688022049

When the American President makes a trip, his plane takes off before the press plane. But when they land, the press plane lands first. So may the nation be sure, should the president happen to crash, of on-the-spot media coverage. *Straight Stuff* is full of such tidbits. James Deakin covered the White House from 1955 to 1980. Like many reporters before him, he has distilled his experiences into a book which combines reminiscence with reflections upon the endlessly fascinating relationship between the presidency and the news media. Lacking a regular forum of publicity, such as prime ministers enjoy in the House of Commons as head of a party and cabinet, American presidents must try more actively to manage their news coverage. As the pretensions of the office have swelled, they have had to try harder. When Deakin came to Washington, Eisenhower's press secretary Jim Hagerly (still, in Deakin's view, the model for the job) had few assistants. Then Kennedy had about seven, led by Pierre Salinger. By Ford's day the number had grown to forty-five. More dramatic, though, is the

of charm and wickedness, kindness and brutality: he could be endlessly generous, yet humiliatingly dismissive of his children in front of casual visitors. Essay after essay in this book picks away at this central paradox. He was the great seducer (and not just of women), a champagne-dispensing cobra who swallowed the talent. How did he do it? And why did he do it?

The answer may lie, as some of the contributors suggest, in Beaverbrook's Calvinism. Deep down, he thought he was damned: not for nothing was Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* one of his favourite books. His therefore was the irresponsibility of those who have nothing to lose, the restless boredom of those who have to fill in the days with activity. The insistent summoning of journalistic retainers to the rooftop flat of Arlington House or the villa in the South of France (or wherever Beaverbrook happened to be in his restless wanderings) was just one symptom of his need to fill the emptiness. Power over people soothed personal pathos.

Yet it is precisely this irresponsibility which helps to explain, I believe, Beaverbrook's ability to entice so many able and quite a few honourable people into his circus: an ability commemorated in this volume. It was not, primarily, his money which seduced people. And it was only partly the flattery of being taken seriously by a man who, in the past at least, had been the boon companion of men like Winston Churchill and Lloyd George. It was, above all, his ability to suggest that he was inviting participation in a conspiracy against respectability and against convention, to convey a sense of mischief, that appealed – and in particular helps to explain his attraction to, and for, left-wingers like Michael Foot. If he was a great corrupter of men – as he undoubtedly was – it was because he persuaded them that having fun was more important than having principles. And if he was a great corrupter of newspapers – as he undoubtedly was also – it was because he persuaded his journalists that doing the unexpected and exciting was more important than integrity.

growth of the Washington press corps, from 251 in 1930 to 4,300 in 1982.

Deakin limits his account to the period of his own experience. This is wise, since the story had been told comprehensively elsewhere and he has used only a sprinkling of secondary sources. The book skillfully interweaves a chronological account of succeeding presidents with treatment of the enduring conundrums: presidential secrecy, news management, leaks, accusations of media bias; and the travails of press secretaries trying to bolster the president's credibility and to get him good coverage.

Deakin does not have much new to say on all this. Presidents since Washington have berated the press. Even those who start with a natural sympathy, such as Kennedy, or with pious intentions, such as Carter ("I'll never lie to you"), scowl at the end. As each incumbent comes and goes the Deakin smile, so it seems, has become more wry. The interests of president and media, he argues, are simply not the same. Presidents want news on their own terms. They prefer to talk at the press, like Nixon, rather than with it; better still, pass it straight to the people, through TV. Even if media did share the same outlook, the practical problems of space, time and deadlines would prevent them satisfying presidents fully. Deakin does not think media should on principle adopt a hostile or "adversarial" stance; but certainly they should always be "critical". There are familiar views, but readers should

disagree with them will probably find Deakin's treatment too perfunctory, as is his handling of issues like the claim that media can "create" events, crises and candidates. The unoriginality of the discussion, however, does not mar the book seriously. It is made up for by the reminiscences, retailed in a droll and occasionally hilarious style. All those years milling about waiting for press briefings evidently breed in survivors a fine sense of the ridiculous. When Deakin is scared of seeming sententious the style strains: "There are tall reporters, short reporters, thin reporters and fat reporters." Self-consciousness even infects the layout: when Deakin develops a heavy argument, the page breaks out in black spots marking each new paragraph.

But in general the book is a delight. It starts with a long and funny account of the Administration's frantic attempts to minimize the seriousness of Eisenhower's various illnesses. So confusing were the first details of his stroke. In 1957 that one news agency reported "it as a heart attack of the brain". Reporters were inundated with trivial information by Hagerly: how Ike's beef soup was made ("you let it sort of gell overnight and you take the fat off that foams on top"), the colour of his pyjamas and the times he was listening to. The president was said to be "consulting" visitors and "taking decisions". But through all the consulting Deakin observes, "ran an undercurrent of briefcase": it was, of course, largely a pre-

Flying the cultural flag

D.J. Enright

FRANCES DONALDSON
The British Council: The first fifty years
40pp. Cape. £16.
024400412

This is essentially an Official History. Indeed, it reads like the official history of a protracted war in which, apparently, only generals and other senior officers were involved. In a war, even a civil war, there has to be an enemy: in this case, primarily, the dread Field Marshal, Lord Beaverbrook, "one of the few deliberately wicked men in British history" (Frances Donaldson) and one who knew how propagandist ought to be, aided and abetted by the changing ideologies of changing governments and the rising and (more often) falling budgets with which the campaign was waged. There is little mention of the private soldier. But then, he was somewhere else, maybe having a high time in foreign parts while savagery raged in Davies Street, Fleet Street, Whitehall. At times the rank and file came unstuck – but in a war there have to be casualties, whether blown up by the enemy or by their own side.

For impressions of life at the grass roots we must look elsewhere. Lady Donaldson, who has had unrestricted access to British Council records and to "relevant" Foreign and Commonwealth Office papers, gives a detailed account of life at the top. This, it appears, was considerably more tumultuous, more vicious, than life at the bottom. The British Council was never allowed to settle into its function, its funding was never secure for very far ahead, it continually had to justify itself anew, on occasion virtually to start again from scratch. As late as June 1980 its Chairman, Sir Charles Troughton, felt it necessary to call on the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and inform her "that the purpose of the Council was to win the minds of people abroad to the British way of life and the great qualities and things we had to offer – our language, arts, professions, institutions, medicine, doctors, accountants, etc."

As a result the proposed cut in the budget was reduced from 25 per cent to 18, so Sir Charles was right – but how pathetic that *purpose* should have to be explained! Intrigues, jockeying for power and for cash, "policy shifts", fending off the wicked Lord and riding the outfit of the wasters of the Lord's demagogic imagination . . . The energy spent during the fifty years of these battles could have brought Shakespeare to every last Bedouin. Even if most of the top brass ended (when they didn't begin) with knightships, some of them must have ended with heart attacks. But such, I suppose, is the British way of life, the very phenomenon at issue.

From her assiduous study of the archives Lady Donaldson has produced what looks rather like an archive itself. Yet a painstaking reading shows that she has abstracted and synthesized with considerable skill, faced as she was by an unending and crowded procession of staff, statesmen and senior civil servants, by Select Committees on Estimates, by the Drogda Report, the Hill and the Hedley Miller and the Duncan Reports, the Beeley Inquiry, the Berrill and the Seaborn Reports, by Working Parties and demarcation disputes with the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office (time and money gone on arguing about who should do what rather than doing it), by Forward Plans and what in effect were Backward Plans.

The story begins with the Council's "architect", Reginald (Rex) Leeper, significantly an Australian by birth, who worked in the News Department of the Foreign Office, and with the unofficial Cultural Relations Committee of 1934 and the initial grant of £5,000 from the Treasury plus donations from a few individuals, industrial firms and publishers. (This at a time when other European countries were spending up to £5 million each on the promotion of their culture abroad.) From the outset the British Council was established, and just where it shouldn't have been – in Britain. It was accused of being political, and blamed for not being political. Its staff were reckoned to be failed diplomats who didn't know what they were doing – or else single third-rate poets who alas did. Compared with the bitter struggle at home, such fiascos in

the field as the defection to the Soviet Union in 1949 of the Representative in Poland, and of a Council medical officer in Czechoslovakia, and the occasional ritual burning-down of Council premises, were mere flea-bites.

Asked for a third name to join those of Sir Reginald Leeper and Lord Lloyd (an idealistic imperialist and indefatigable Chairman from 1937 to 1941) as of the first importance in the history of the British Council, few of those in the know – Lady Donaldson writes – would hesitate to propose Sir Paul Sinker, Director-General between 1954 and 1968. In a farewell speech on his retirement, his Deputy said that Sinker had brought to the Council "many Roman gifts . . . law, straight roads and a great Empire", adding that they were "no longer a bunch of long-haired, crackpot intellectuals, concerned with deer-stalking or Morris dancing . . .". My impression is that Sinker was not merely reacting to the old gibes of the Beaverbrook press about a "race of long-haired, effeminate and ineffectual men"; he was by nature antipathetic to the relatively few "eccentrics" or outsiders still in the service. I had done two short contracts for the Council when Sir Paul offered me the choice of withdrawing a novel then in the press or never expecting another contract. When the novel appeared – it was set in a country I had recently worked in – it offended no one, and pleased but few. Nice, though, to be noticed by the bosses. Sinker had troubles enough, and I must admit to a certain faint admiration for his briskeness. Though as it happened there was little sense in his ultimatum, the effect was not uninvigorating. To be tolerated, like a court jester, can be demoralizing; every now and then a writer needs to be obliged to make a choice, and risk something.

While some, Lady Donaldson notes, still mourn the passing of the old eccentrics, others do not. Eccentrics come in diverse shapes and sizes, and not all of them were to be seen weaving about at dubious parties with a bottle in one hand and a flower in the other, spouting seditious Shelley or incomprehensible Eliot. Some of them were thought, rightly or wrongly, to bear mysterious and useful wisdom about them; their affection for the people they worked among was genuine, not merely prescribed; they were plainly not "imperialists" or "neo-colonialists". In my view the worst mistake the Council made was to identify itself increasingly with the diplomatic establishment. We know that he who pays the piper calls the tune, but even so a little more courage would not have come amiss. Perhaps it didn't matter too much that a Council employee wasn't sure whether he was meant to satisfy the natives or court the Embassy wives – it was what the natives believed or suspected that counted. They may have had good cause to distrust official culture, whatever its provenance. Happily there have always been some Council workers who are their own men, and are recognized by the local people as such.

The second bad mistake, promoted vigorously during the 1960s, was to cast overboard "the luggage of literature" in the cause of teaching language, "pure" language, utilitarian, undebated by writers. Though unhappy about this turn of events, Lady Donaldson doesn't convey the full force of the animosity shown towards the teaching and study of literature, the meers directed even at teachers of the subject, in long-established overseas universities.

As Number 12 in its series of Research Reports, the School of Librarianship and Information Studies has recently issued *Public Libraries and Self-Help Minority Organizations* by Pirkko Elliott (234pp. OLS, Polytechnic of North London, Ludbrook House, 62-6 Highbury Grove, London N5 2AD. £5.90. 0 946232 18 0). The aims of the monograph are adumbrated in its subtitle, "A study of the relationship between public libraries, advice/information services and libraries, bookshops and publishers set up by ethnic minority groups," and include an examination of institutions catering for more than twenty-five minority languages. After an opening section on "Methodology", the author details the results of her research: summarizing her conclusions, she reveals that the ethnic self-help organizations continue to expand in number. The work includes a comprehensive 84-page list of self-help ethnic minority organizations in London and the services they supply.

ties, who had nothing at all to do with the Council, who drew not a penny from its coffers. This was the age of ELT triumphant, English Language Teaching, a worthy and surely ancient enterprise, now armed with mighty sub-divisions such as ESL (English as a second language), EFL (as a foreign language), ESP (for special purposes). It was the age of brave new techniques whereby people learnt how to teach a language without actually learning it and could then teach other people how to teach that language without needing to learn it. Foreigners who knew English already – who could perhaps read Shakespeare and even Chaucer with pleasure and fair understanding, and would be expected to follow lectures by such visitors as Iris Murdoch or Angus Wilson – had better forget what they knew and start afresh. Literature, though (as you might say) instinct with language, had become not merely a poor relation but a disreputable one.

Lady Donaldson derives some entertainment from the knowledge that the Council officer, Controller of Education Division, who was the prime instigator in this matter, later became a Mormon and, having left the Council, went to teach English literature at the University of Utah. (I can't say I find this bit of knowledge exactly amusing.) The vision of manic professors gratuitously thrusting foreign books down the throats of innocent natives would hardly have found a lodging place in the mind of the wicked Lord himself. When Lady Donaldson was touring British Council establishments in India in 1982 she encountered a common indigenous resentment against "utilitarian" attitudes, evinced for instance in the plaintive remark, "English literature is the only real British heritage, technology comes from all over the world."

The files have yielded up diverting as well as alarming tidbits. In 1939 Lord Lloyd wrote thus to Lord Halifax, then Foreign Secretary: "For instance I think I could show you that for £6,000 p.a. I could guarantee to get rid of hostile Italian influence in Malta & to make

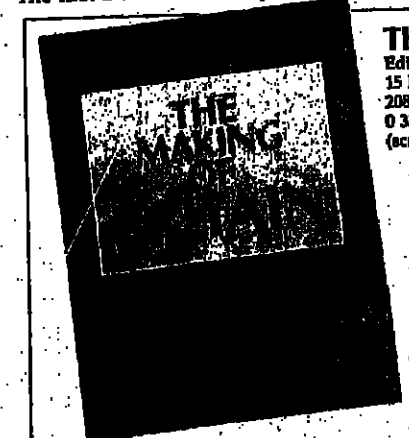
that fortress permanently British in sentiment & aim and so on, da capo." More grimly, Churchill told his Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, in 1944 that the British Council needed watching: "We must be very careful this does not grow upon us." And Lady Donaldson can be sharp-tongued herself, observing that in her research she came across hardly anyone who was not personally in favour of the activities they were proposing to cut. "One is forcibly reminded of the saying: 'When people speak of their honour, it is time to lock up the spoons.'" Comparing a late Report with an early one, she is unable to avoid "melancholy reflection on how much the use of English in England has deteriorated" between 1953 and the late 1970s. (By now an old and universal story, repeated every day: more words used, despite "time-saving" officialese and neologisms, and less said.) Especially welcome is the tribute she pays to the Council's locally appointed helpers, whose more intimate or realistic knowledge of the scene can be invaluable, and who often maintain an element of continuity while London staff come and go. It is worse than sad that, for all their loyalty, they have been the first to lose their jobs when money ran low.

The British Council is more necessary today than ever before. In somewhat the same sense that the last English gentleman is likely to be an Indian, the last readers of English literature – reading not to be "with it" but to learn from it – could well be foreigners. The only unique and decent export we have – and there is no doubt in my mind that there is a demand for it – is our (forgive the word!) culture, along with the scientific and technical enterprise for which there doesn't always seem much use at home. Now that the whole world is soon to understand the language, thanks or not to the machinery of ELT, and thanks perhaps to that American ex-colony of ours, the prospect is set fair. In losing an Empire, Britain has found a role. The British Council is fifty years old. The less we can afford it, the more we need it. May it – in the ways I have hinted at – live for ever.

THE MAKING OF BRITAIN

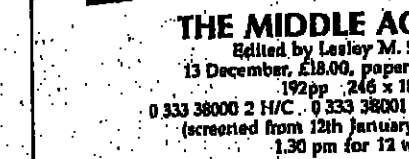
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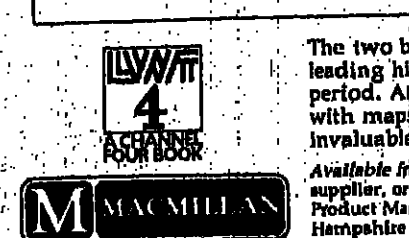
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Methuen

"What I don't see is how these two can claim to be contemporary if they run away from the biggest event in contemporary history." . . . It was an awkward question; one that in military parlance was called "a swift one". At any moment, it was felt in the studio, this innocent girl would use the word "escapism" . . . "It's just sheer escapism," she said. The word startled the studio, like the cry of "Cheer" in a card-room.

"That's a foul thing to say, Julia."

"Well, what's the answer?"

In the year of his eightieth birthday, more than forty-five years after he left, some feel that the awkward question (posed here by Julia in *Put Out More Flags*) of Christopher Isherwood's emigration, just before the outbreak of the Second World War, remains. Cowardice clearly isn't the answer; even Waugh didn't suggest that. Isherwood, indeed, saw it just the other way about. Someone had told him that in New York he would find sympathy in the dictionary and everything else at the nearest drug-store. He accepted that as "a challenge to be tough" . . . God! What a terrifying place this suddenly seemed!

Cowardice isn't the answer because he had already, just a year before, risked his life and gone out with Auden to observe the war in China. Paradoxically, if he hadn't been bombed there he probably would have stayed to fight in Europe, simply to prove to himself that he dared. But sailing away from China "he became aware that he had now lost much of his neurotic fear of 'War' . . . This self-knowledge would influence his future decisions, making him less inclined to worry how the world might judge them." The Test of War, set by his father at Ypres in 1917, was passed; there could be no point in setting himself the test again in a war with Germany.

In any case, it was to be a public affair; to fight in it he would have to close ranks with the displaced family of England. This was at a time, Isherwood tells us, when even the Popular Front was becoming too popular for him. He had chosen China in 1938 because "unlike Spain, it wasn't already crowded with star literary observers". "We'll have a war all of our very own", Auden had declared. Now, under no neurotic compulsion to stay, it was more agreeable to his sense of himself as a conspirator to leave. Having forced himself to be a man he could, as the boat-train for America

pulled away, be a child again: "He and Wystan exchanged grins, schoolboy grins which took them back to the earliest days of their friendship. 'Well,' said Christopher, 'we're off again.' 'Goody,' said Wystan." So the simple answer to Julia's indecent question is still that Isherwood and Auden had decided not to be contemporary, but to escape. A way of understanding the fictions of his American years is as an explanation of his reaction to what he termed "the crisis-in-relation-to-me".

Prater Violet is set in London in 1933-4, the time of the Reichstag fire trial and the German annexation of Austria. Against this urgent, insistent background "Christopher Isherwood" and an exiled Austrian director, Bergmann, work on a film about a flower-girl in Vienna and her love affair with Rudolf, the Crown Prince of Rorodania. The film *Prater Violet* is of no conceivable value in the fight against Nazism, a fact of which Bergmann is torturedly aware: "The picture! I — upon the picture! This heartless filth! This wretched lying charade! To make such a picture at such a time is definitely heartless. It is a crime. It definitely aids Dolfuss!" But Isherwood and Bergmann are privately compelled by their subject-matter, because for them it is a fable of their position: of the psychological inability of the bourgeois to submit himself to the anonymous struggle of the masses. Recognizing Bergmann as a father, Isherwood is released from guilt at failing to live up to imagined paternalistic values of duty and self-negation. Bergmann reciprocally imagines Christopher his son, a "poor Shelley", cast out and drowning. Together father and son develop a *maladie à deux*, inhabiting a fantastic, displacing world in which the film company is the German state, its executives secret policemen, their own work a heroic frustration of third-degree intimidation.

In this way, through Bergmann's infecting, vigorously paranoid imagination, Isherwood's circumstances are redefined. He is relieved of responsibilities for which he has become as it were genetically unfitted; while events in Europe, which before threatened the "total end of my imagined world", can now be colonized by the imagination. Nazi Germany, through a monstrous expansion of the novelist's ego, becomes the Mortmain of Edward Upward's early stories.

Though *The World in the Evening* is similarly an account of an infantile egocentric response to the crisis of conscience of war, it is a thematic sequel to *Prater Violet* in that it suggests an alternative, even opposite, strategy of escape: sainthood. The technical challenges involved fascinated Isherwood, as he explains in "The Problem of the Religious Novel", an essay collected in *Exhumations*. How might one formulate a credible conversion? By adopting, he says, a hard, unsentimental tone; after all "Sports writers find no pathos in the hardships of a boxer's training."

In *The World in the Evening* that tough tone, more largely considered, is a movement away from the colossal self-indulgence of *Prater Violet* and, by implication, his earlier self. "I'm

tired of strumming on that old harp, the Ego, darling Me", he had complained in 1939. "Stephen Monk" similarly knows himself as "tyrant Me": a tyranny of self-interest with a corresponding burden of guilt. Monk can't stop running away, spiritually and physically, until literally immobilized by self-reproach he is hit by a truck and laid out in plaster for ten weeks. He spends the time rotting away and reforming to emerge recast, selfless and self-forgiven.

The agency of Monk's conversion is the writing of his dead wife Elizabeth. Her novel *The*



World in the Evening precipitates the central discussion of the proper reaction of the writer — which is to say a writer like Christopher Isherwood — to the contemporary demand for direct political engagement. A German refugee, her husband probably murdered by the Nazis, protests that in Elizabeth's novel there is no reflection that "People are taken in concentration camps and beaten and tortured and burned like the garbage in ovens!" "She cared terribly," Monk explains. "Far more than most people do. You must have realized that, surely. It's all there in the book. That whole part about Terence Storrs and Isabel . . ." The point, like it or not, is that such a fiction of personal relationships constitutes not an abandonment of the cause of humanity but a direct action on its behalf; the inner life, as Auden said of Forster, can pay. The irony of militant contemplation is packaged in the title: "the world in the evening" alludes both to *Die Welt am Abend*, a Berlin communist newspaper, and Donne's "The Progress of the Soul".

When he arrived in America Isherwood swiftly became a Vedantist. Vedanta he found to be a liberal Hindu faith, allowing war and encouraging pacifism; a sort of Forster-across-the-water. It offered to solve, in the words of another exhumed essay, "the greatest problem": "How, in this complex world, are we to know what our duty is?" The solution, for each one to follow "without compromise, the path on which he finds himself", was "the one supremely social act". For Isherwood the path appeared to be pacifism and withdrawal, and *Prater Violet* and *The World in the Evening* are easily read as promotions of the individual's right to retire: — though retirement takes two very different forms. While Monk learns a religious passivity, for "Christopher Isherwood" self-effacement is an intolerable prospect: "I should no longer be a person. I should no longer be Christopher Isherwood. No, no. That I can never face." *A Meeting by the River* is a confrontation of the two personae of the earlier novels, in the form of brothers: "Either make up your mind to be a monk or a dirty old man," a friend told Isherwood in 1943, when he was spending time between the Vedanta Centre and the beach. The brother Oliver makes up his mind to be a monk, prompting Patrick to fly out to India cynically to reclaim him for the world. Just failing, he is himself betrayed into "a state of grace" and becomes, through a new awareness of the kind of man he is, a holy sinner. In him the focus of interest and sympathy is finally, unexpectedly, relocated. Monk's conversion, uncommitted to

but, as John Layard would have said, purely heart.

The shift of sympathies seems to reflect Isherwood's understanding of his own position within Vedanta. As a youth he had had a night-mare fantasy of vanishing "into silence and eternal indoors, trapped by the Trappists, a monk!" Through the 1940s and 50s he realized that the exchange of "Christopher Isherwood" for a Sanskrit name, the suppression of his novelistic gift and the forfeiture of his sexuality would be wounds too terrible to bear. But in 1953 he had a dream about a new instruction his swami gave him. "I've got a new mantra for you Chris. It is *Always dance*." "What a strange mantra!" I said, Swami laughed. "Yes, it surprised me, too. But I found it in the scriptures." "Like Patrick he can be himself, untrapped, and be in a state of grace. Layard taught him in Berlin that to be good is not to be happy, but to be happy is to be good."

A piece of waking advice his swami gave him was "Purity is telling the truth." Over the past twenty years Isherwood has been, religiously, telling the truth about himself. We can see now, as Waugh couldn't, that in crossing the Atlantic in 1939 he was not breaking faith with the times, but keeping faith with himself. The broad movement of Isherwood's career is from conspiracy to confession. In the course of an introduction to Isherwood's first book, *All the Conspirators*, Cyril Connolly wrote of the author's "austere and conscientious assumption of a co-operative and intelligent reader". But in *Exhumations*, a selection of unpublished or uncollected poems, short fictions, sketches and critical pieces (dug up "to convict the author of hitherto unpunished crimes") Isherwood mocks the decorum of the phrase: "In those days", he says more bluntly, "I loved to mystify my reader."

It wasn't to be known in 1966, when *Exhumations* first appeared, that a new public phase of a writer's life had begun. But *Kahlua and Frank* followed, then *Christopher and his Kind* and *My Guru and his Disciple*, all heroically candid and remorselessly explanatory; not insidiously self-mythologizing like the much earlier autobiography, *Lionel and Shadows*.

The early Isherwood was a tease, a knowing boy with whom one never was quite sure if one had an understanding. "Who is that funny-looking young man so squat with a top-heavy head / A cross between a cavalry major and a rather prim landlady / Sitting there sipping a cigarette?" Auden asked. "A brilliant young novelist?" You don't say! "A constellation of changes prepared for this latest period of demystification. Working as a script-writer on films shocked Isherwood's prose into simplicity; the urge to explain his desertion, his sexuality and his religion all made for open declaration.

Not many talents could withstand being encoded and decoded so many times and so satisfactorily. But no writer has ever confronted his reader with so many near-likenesses: Chris, Christoph, Christopher, Christopher Isherwood, Kristopher Ischerwood, Herr Issyvon, William Bradshaw, even (once) C.W.B. Isherwood. They are all, blushing, stammering, swaggering, calculating, grinning, private faces in public places, and we are wiser and nicer to be complicit in their crimes.

The latest volume in the Preface Books Series, is Allan Rodway's *A Preface to Auden* (172pp. Longman. £5.25. 0 58235 326 2) which pays close attention to a small number of poems, in particular "The Shield of Achilles", from both Auden's English and American periods. The book is divided into three parts: One, "The Poet and his Setting", is subdivided into three sections, "Auden's Life", "The political and historical context — pre-war, Spain, post-war" and "The Cultural and Philosophical Context"; this last contains chapters on Auden's studies of Freud, Marx and Kierkegaard; Part Two "Critical Survey" includes examinations of: Auden's Imagery, "Themes, and Treatment", "Myth and Verification", and detailed analyses of a selection of poems including "Look Stranger" and "Lay Your Sleeping Head". Part Three — the reference section — contains a gazetteer and a bibliography; the book is amply and appositely illustrated and is supplied with chronological tables and an index.

The trouble with good design

Adolf Muschg

Can Swiss literature be said to exist?

Of course, there are writers in Switzerland writing in German, French, Italian — not to forget Rhaeto-Romansch, which is likely soon to survive only in literary form. They can all produce their red passport with its white cross, a document which confers considerable privileges and which in time of war can save lives. They would be prouder had it been (and were it) used more sparingly for the former and more liberally for the latter purpose. Thanks to the cultural foundation, Pro Helvetia, writers are constantly brought together to discuss the problem of whether there is such a thing as Swiss literature. Their conclusion depends on the public: where they sense that conclusion to be foregone, they are inclined to resist it. Ahead, they encounter an occasionally critical but on the whole flattering (and despite envy, also patronizing) Swiss cliché, and when explaining their differences, tend to adopt a didactic tone of voice — thus revealing their Swissness. At home, they diverge more sharply. One way or another, they are reluctant to rest on the laurels of their Swiss identity. There is only one thing they find more difficult to bear: to be ignored, by people (abroad) who don't know or people (at home) who don't want to know, about their disagreements. They are equally reluctant to be given credit for what they don't deserve, and to be made a present of what they have earned. By contrast with the majority of their fellow citizens, Swiss writers are poor at what J. R. von Salis called a "schwierige Schweiz". They tend to be allergic to off-hand compliments and blind patriotism: it is in this that their own patriotism consists. They take on board the accusation of being one-sided, or even — the word actually does exist — "unSwiss". But what would be Swiss? The state of Switzerland was formed on a basis of common interests, and not because its political or cultural unity was "natural". Nevertheless, since the eighteenth century eulogies of nature and the natural have become a profoundly Swiss topos, eulogies which have come from outside Switzerland. Looked at in the clear light of day, there is little that is native about this offshoot of classical pastoral literature. Rousseau exalted "the land of shepherds" into a Utopia of sound morals and simple living. Schiller gave them *Wilhelm Tell*, an ancient wayfaring tale, as their literary classic. The British made an object of veneration, as well as a goal for sporting conquest, of what had been simply a natural obstacle: the Alps. Even Swiss Yodel culture is fed by Tyrolean imports, a fact which has never deterred colonial clubs and patriotic speakers from proclaiming these European borrowings as being "typically Swiss". On the other hand, Switzerland's real achievement, its rise from a developing country poor in raw materials, to a rich industrial state and international centre of commerce, is shrouded in a mist of unhistorical legends — as if God Almighty Himself (Patron of the Swiss Constitution) had permitted the hard-working, individuality of the Swiss to flourish, protecting our national character (not entirely unaided by a trusty militia) through two world wars against "the cunning of the times". For over a hundred years, since Gottfried Keller's and Gottfried Keller's sad and bitter *Martin Salander*, Swiss writing has retained this hypocritically modest self-image, which leaves plenty of scope for profit and self-righteousness.

Typical of this, both for literature and the nation, when their identity had to be asserted: "Schweizerdichter" (Swiss poet) was even written as a single word. Thus it was in the 1930s and 40s, when European fascism imposed a cultural and military state of siege. The "spiritual defence of the country" did not sit well with self-criticism and forced a "Heimatstil" on writers, tantamount to drying out the devil with Bezugsbuch. Writers like Jakob Bührer, Melchior Ingrid and Albin Zollinger insisted on that "cultural" openness which Keller in his *Großer Heinrich* had declared a patriotic duty. (and hence had no difficulty calling himself a "German" writer) against the fervour of blood and soil, that strict praise of national character with more than a hint of totalitarian proyness. The gap between Swiss writing and the Swiss establishment did not diminish when the

country brazenly set about building up its post-war prosperity. Dürrenmatt's *Besuch der alten Dame* and Frisch's diaries take exception to a society which allows itself to be ethically and politically impoverished while increasing its material wealth.

If the Swiss policy of granting political asylum is taken as a measure of inner freedom, then the atrophy of that freedom over the past 150 years must be obvious. Before and after 1848, the young Federation became a refuge for European democrats, their second and often definitive home. They participated in setting up institutions of government and were a decisive influence in education. The writs for the arrest of Georg Büchner, Herwegh, Richard Wagner or Bakunin did not run there; indeed, they sometimes even granted citizenship. Even during the First World War, it was not the police who had the last word about "subversive" foreigners like Lenin, Joyce or the Dadaists; and the "Salvation Seekers" on Monte Verità near Ascona were allowed to build their New Jerusalem unmolested. How different was the Second World War, when refugees encountered a "no room at the inn" policy and were shoved over the border — where to, exactly, nobody inquired too carefully.

Even when they achieved world fame, writers were not forgiven for accusing Switzerland of falling short of its own liberal and humanitarian tradition. So it is easier for a reader in Australia than for many a Swiss civil servant to understand that Frisch's *Dienstbuechlein*, for instance, an angry look back at the siege mentality of the war years, should be seen as a testimony of patriotism. Yet in 1955 Frisch asked the Swiss establishment whether it still had "any ideas"; ten years later, he asked his colleagues whether Switzerland was still a theme for them.

Of course, writers in French and Italian have always had different worries about identity. Their double minority status (political within their language groups, cultural within their own country) forced them to choose their identity not as Swiss, but within either a much broader or a much narrower framework (if it makes sense to speak of "choice" at all in this context). From Paris or Milan, they were seen as provincial. So they either allowed themselves to be attracted and absorbed by these centres (how many people know that Robert Pinget is Swiss, or Jean-Luc Godard, Le Corbusier, Alberto Giacometti?). Or they asserted their regional roots with pride or defiance. They found these roots in their villages, their landscape, even in their state, which never extended beyond the boundaries of their canton. Even for Ramuz, the greatest writer of Suisse romande, Switzerland was more of a cultural irritation than an emotional reality. Either writers are European, like Denis de Rougemont — or they are Vaudais like Chexes, Valaisans like Chapoz, Ticinese like Bianconi, Juraissans like Voisard.

For some time this caused a strange contradiction in Swiss writing. While the German Swiss were producing "engaged" literature and challenged their readers to take a critical view of Switzerland, writers from Suisse romande or Ticino kept the image of the "Heimat" ("homeland") as unquestioned as their "good style". That was in the 1960s when — in German — every kind of subjectivity and formal conservatism was suspect as conformist, romantic, or escapist. If needed a vigorous change of cultural paradigm, if not to dissolve these barriers, then to render them insignificant.

For the scene has changed. In face of the steady destruction of the environment, "homeland" has ceased to be a dirty word in any language. Engagement against the war in Vietnam has given place to concern for the tree at the street-corner. Does the fact that literary themes have become more concrete mean that they have also become more provincial? But it is precisely Swiss dialect literature that illustrates a strange, apparently paradoxical state of affairs. The "modern mundart", or dialect (as the Germans call it) of Marti, Eggmann or Burri is not the "refined" idiom of older dialect writing. What they pronounce in the dialect is really the concerns of a generation. It is the everyday language of victims of vast systems of all kinds: from high technology and multi-national organizations to

centralized bureaucracy. The "little word" fights against all this for its right to live. It knows — small as beautiful — how to value its peculiar charm. As the voice of "regional autonomy", the German of Bern or Solothurn finds itself in cosmopolitan company from Quebec to Kurdistan.

In the meantime, to be sure, the use of dialect in Switzerland has assumed the dimensions of a "dialect wave". The new media, above all commercial broadcasting, have recently used dialect so widely and so indiscriminately that there is reason to worry about Swiss competence in standard German. Much is at stake if the German-Swiss linguistic landscape is to be "hollandized": membership of one of the great cultural languages; the tradition of indigenous Swiss literature, the most important works of which are written in the "foreign" standard German; communication with fellow citizens speaking different languages (!); and last but not least, the specific role, that is to say, the intrinsic character of the dialects. For if there is anything that merits the label "Swiss" in the predicament of German writing in Switzerland, then it is the tension between the dialects and the standard, literary language. Peter Bichsel, for example, has shown in his prose that far from impeding the Swiss writer, this tension trains him to use language self-consciously, critically and also cunningly.

The fact that foreigners frequently commend Switzerland for producing the only "good" German may be seen in this light — perhaps because it was always predominantly written German. But I should like to pursue the theme of *Qualitätsarbeit* (highly skilled handwork), for which the Swiss have always been praised, into a different field: that of "Guten Form" (Good Design). The contradictions here resemble those found in dialect writing. After the war, Switzerland had for a long time the best designed interiors in Europe (apart from Scandinavia). The visitor encountered the austere standards of "Neue Sachlichkeit" (New Sobriety) in typography, street-

advertising, furniture design and arts-and-crafts at a time when these standards had disappeared from the rest of Europe along with the Bauhaus in Dessau, and had not yet re-emerged in the total functionalism of the American cities. But was it coincidence, or was it part of the "Swiss national character", that the social reformist potential once possessed by Good Design was dissipated by its proliferation? That "function" became a meaningless formula, an aesthetic umbrella for absolutely everything? Is it coincidence that the Swiss Gomerling, one of the fathers of concrete poetry, made its incisive, graphic wit the universal language of advertising, so that yesterday's avant-garde now leaps at us from every wall? Is it coincidence that the colophon of one of the largest banks in Switzerland harmonizes so well on the Bahnhofstrasse in Zürich with the huge sculpture by Max Bill, which it sponsored? The Swiss have always had a greater flair for using, selling and popularizing art than for creating it. "Le génie suisse" of the erstwhile nation of shepherds and peasants has come into its own in the "applied" arts of manufacture, business and service.

No doubt, this is an aspect of the celebrated Swiss "realism" which is part and parcel of the political astuteness, the (more or less) clean business methods of the successful small state. But this vein of realism is also supposed to run through Swiss literature. And indeed, however ill the historical success of Switzerland may accord with its self-critical literature, they have their common roots in the spirit of the Reformation.

The most important German and French writers in Swiss literature have been in the main (until a few decades ago, exclusively) of the Reformed faith. Their writing had its origins in the vicarages and classrooms and so it tended to preach, to instruct, to serve. Their own "realism", however, insisted on the guilt motive — in the face of public righteousness and bourgeois success: theirs was a culture of (bad) conscience — sometimes to the point of person-

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al desperation. Literature clung to scrupulous restraint especially when Swiss trade flourished. This emerges in the prophetic gesturing of Dürrenmatt as well as in Pestalozzi's spirit of service; it shows in the profound linguistic scepticism of Robert Walser as well as in the reclusiveness of Ludwig Hohl. Perhaps Frisch demonstrates most trenchantly that criticism of public life cannot be separated from the cult of self-criticism. Examination of the personal conscience is central to the heritage of the Reformed Church in Swiss writing. Writers like Amiel or Yves Velin – or Fritz Zorn – drove themselves to the point of self-condemnation. For the tradition of the Reformed Church, unlike the Catholic or the Lutheran, does not distinguish between secular and ecclesiastical life: nor, therefore, between private conscience and public morals. For its writers, then, the history of Switzerland is always tinged with the Last Judgment. As the newly fledged chief clerk of the state of Zürich, the atheist Gottfried Keller in his first decree for the Swiss Thanksgiving Day threatened the "model" of Switzerland with the "hammer of God" should it fail politically or theologically. No wonder those in power at the time took care not to have this edict read from all the pulpits of Zürich as was normally the practice. Swiss literature from Gottfried and Spitteler to Frisch has its more or less traditional place in the Old Testament background of the citizen-writer as the fierce and unloved prophet of "God's people".

The historical dialogue of salvation between the prophet and his people has long since fallen on deaf ears. Nevertheless, the writer is still expected to be a good citizen. Basically all that is left now is demonstrations of mutual displeasure. Fritz "Zorn" (pseudonym for Angst), a teacher of Spanish suffering from cancer, a product of and outcast from the Swiss *haute bourgeoisie*, passed judgment of death on it. His book became the basis of a cult well beyond Swiss frontiers. It confirmed the darkened image of Switzerland outlined by Jean Ziegler in his famous pamphlets, albeit with other alps. The suppressed revolts of the young of the sentence on the notorious "Sprayer of Zürich" – nine months without probation – bear witness to the gap in communication between the Swiss establishment and its fringe groups, among which artists must now be numbered. Their answer – an autonomous and formally radicalized art form – is new in Swiss writing, and new not only due to the well-known "belatedness" of Swiss style.

And yet, "l'art pour l'art", renunciation of a role in public life, also has its roots in the culture of the Reformed Church. Even the Good Design of Conrad F. Meyer was a matter of conscience. Its achievement – and his – consisted in providing as complete an aesthetic compensation as possible for social deprivation and isolation. Here, too, in these artefacts, the Calvinist kernel of "justification" may still be found. Perhaps one may see an element of compensation in formal perfectionism as such, which one encounters not only in the literature of Switzerland, but also in her image of absolute cleanliness. There is something of a sym-

bolic socialization in it. Precise, exact form as a substitute for a not quite fulfilled life, with the useful side effect that this substitute sells well.

Indictment, self-indictment, aesthetic compensation: the list of "typical" behaviour patterns in Swiss writing is incomplete without that of flight. In past centuries, it had been the geographical and economic narrowness of Switzerland that drove its sons into foreign service, where they suffered from the "Swiss disease" – homesickness. Today, it is the cultural narrowness of the country from which Swiss writers take flight (in their themes but increasingly also literally). However they are never certain whether to describe their absence from their loved/hated little country as an opportunity to live or as an exile. During the past few years a considerable section of Swiss literature has taken shape in New York (Frisch, Federspiel), Los Angeles (Vogt,

Loetscher) Berlin (Jaeggi, Hürlimann), Frankfurt (Urs Widmer), or Paris (Paul Nizon). The question of identity which preoccupied Frisch's *Stiller* has, in the meantime, shifted ground, become generalized, denationalized. Switzerland is no longer its own favourite topic. Not only, to quote Keller's *Salander*, because it is "chez nous comme partout", but, vice versa, because it is "partout comme chez nous". With the universal threat of the arms race, destruction of the environment, overpopulation, the economic divide between North and South, there is nothing quaint any more about being Swiss.

So it makes less and less sense to talk in terms of "Swiss literature". "Multi-language" problems become pure folklore in face of the expropriation of language altogether. National frontiers take second place when civilization itself is on the borderline. Swiss topography no

longer emerges as "typical" in literature, but as a paradigm case. Those aspects of the "homeland" which are threatened everywhere also have to be protected from "Swiss" efficiency. Perceptive readers like Kafka and Walter Benjamin were aware that the characteristic "Swiss" diminutives in the work of Robert Walser were an expression of something quite different and uncomfortable. A deeply disturbed and "alienated" consciousness sought protection in smallness against the enveloping darkness. For many Swiss writers, "responsible" language – particularly its caricature in political rhetoric – has become impossible to bear; it has given way to apparently irresponsible patterns of literary behaviour; a quiet radicalization of poetical means that often sounds like "whistling in the dark". The "formalist" excesses of Jürg Laederach, Hermann Burger, Reto Haenni or Felix Ingold are something new in Swiss literature. They have replaced the Reformed conscience by an acute self-consciousness of art – as a symbolic, if doubtful strategy for human survival.

It is unlikely that this kind of writing will soften the pressure of "everyday apocalypse". But in the radicalization of its forms it can at least demonstrate how "dear" – in every sense of the word – a concept like "homeland" has become. Literature flies a flag for fantasy, fantasy which perhaps already stands only a fantastically small chance, which yet is essential not only for survival but for the simplest life. That literature in Switzerland nevertheless prefers to speak softly, and aims its sights at the unassuming rather than the spectacular; that it writes its last words more often than not in lower case – in this one may indeed discover the residue of what is peculiarly Swiss. But this, too, lives in the certainty – which can no longer even be a matter for regret – that Switzerland is no longer a special case.



Carnival in Mendrisio: a photograph by Gino Pedrolli reproduced from Tessin (see caption on page 1422).

The crazy country

Jonathan Steinberg

ALBERTO NESSI
Terra Matta
106pp. Locarno: Armando Dadò. Sw. fr. 19.

A taste for the literature of Italian Switzerland is a little odd. During the visit some years ago of a distinguished Swiss Italian literary critic, I found that in a room full of professional Italianists I was the only person there who had read any of it. Recently, when I asked two cultivated Italians whether they had ever heard of Francesco Chiesa, Giorgio Orelli, Giovanni Orelli, Pjino Martini, Piero Bianconi, or Grytzko Mascioni, the answer was no. No well-read German would be unacquainted with Frisch, Dürrenmatt or Muschg.

One of the Italians, slightly embarrassed by my question, remarked that the obscurity of the Swiss writers no doubt said something about their quality, but I deny that. Bianconi's *Albera genealogica* is one of the best books that has been written about immigrant life, a small classic comparable to Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*. Giovanni Orelli's *L'anno della valanga* won the Veillon prize in 1964 and his more recent *La Festa del ringraziamento* struck me as the most subtle of the wave of Swiss writing of the 1960s and 1970s which poured acid on the complacency of Switzerland's wealthy, somnolent bourgeoisie. Francesco Chiesa's prose and poetry mark the transition from late romanticism to modernism in a way which will stand comparison with writers like Flaubert. There is, then, plenty of quality and variety in Swiss Italian literature, and that variety is the more remarkable since it comes from a community of roughly three hundred thousand inhabitants.

The real case for this literature is not, however, a purely literary one nor even that it offers an unexpected image of Switzerland, although it does. The first story in Alberto Nessi's fine collection is about a Swiss bandit; *Il Mattino*, who robbed the rich and gave to the poor during the 1840s. It is hard to reconcile the image of clocks, chocolate and banks with that of a swashbuckling, knife-wielding bandit.

The real case goes beyond that to an area of great subtlety but considerable importance: the

Italian Switzerland poses in an acute but elusive way the nature of culture itself. Samuel Butler caught this in his *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and Canton Ticino*, which he published in 1882. He was attracted by the fact that Canton Ticino "though politically Swiss is as much Italian in character as any part of Italy". It is the transformation which culture undergoes on either side of the invisible walls made by political divisions that constitutes the strange fascination of the Republic and Canton of Ticino, the one wholly Italian-speaking canton of the Swiss confederation. What is it that a hundred years after Butler wrote keeps Italy and Italian Switzerland so close and yet so different? I once walked across the bridge which connects Ponte Tresa (Italy) from Ponte Tresa (Switzerland): on one side the noise, chaos, bustle and peeling façades of any Italian town on a Sunday; on the other the silence, order, glistening jewelry shops and bank frontages of Switzerland. Italy looked Italian; Switzerland Swiss.

Alberto Nessi's *terra matta* belongs to the area of Ticino called the *Mendrisiotto*. It is the southernmost part of the entire Swiss Confederation and all his stories play out their plots against and across borders. The first, the title story, depends on the closing of the border in 1847 by the Italians because the Swiss are harbouring revolutionaries. The second, "Manifattura tabacchi", recalls the strike in 1917 by the women working in the tobacco factories on the Italian-Swiss border, and the third, "Tonio", is a sort of literary biography of a young man who rebels in the late 1920s against the orderliness of his life and becomes an agitator, fights in Spain and ends his days back in Italian Switzerland still horrified by the complacency of Swiss life.

The frontier, the existence of another culture of the same language but different politics to the south, and another culture of different language (German) but the same politics (Swiss) to the north, frames the cultural and political identity not only of the characters in Nessi's stories but of the Italian Swiss in general. There is something Germanic, neat, punctilious, complacent about the centres of Lugano or Mendrisio, but there is also an intensely Italian quality to the lives and values of the people, their baroque town churches, their art, their political ideas and their growth.

Nessi's characters are quintessentially Italian in their localism, their attachment to tiny communities, and their rooted regional identities. For Nessi, the *Mendrisiotto* is *terra matta*, crazy country, because its people cling to their illusion that their claims might some day be heard, that justice might just once be done to the poor and that the present order might be changed. The perennial lament of Italian peasants comes through in these stories. The tragedy of forced emigration, the humiliations of life at the bottom, are experiences common to the Ticino and to parts of Italy. What is Swiss is the attitude of the *Mattino*, who, when he hears that the Italians have closed the border, decides to organize a popular rising and goes to the mayor of his village to claim the citizen's weapons as of right, an ancient sign of the free man, the right to keep his own arms. After all, the *Mattino* may be a bandit but he is a *patriot*, a citizen of the tiny republic of Vercello. The *Mendrisiotto* are poor but not servile, and this political identity gives them their distinctive set of attitudes. Even Tonio, down and out after the defeat of the Spanish Republic, gets better treatment from the Marcelline police when he says that he is Swiss not Italian and goes from the police station still in filthy rags to the best hotel in town, where he expects to be, and is, received as an equal by the Ticinese who runs it.

These stories are not easy to read. Nessi, a poet primarily, wants to capture in his prose the sounds of local speech. To do that, like all Italian writers who take ordinary people as their subjects, he has to confront or get round the reality of dialect. In daily life the *Mendrisiotto* normally speak a dialect often incomprehensible to Italian-speakers. Dialects were and are particularly idiosyncratic in mountainous regions like Italian Switzerland. There are, therefore, in these stories words and expressions not to be found in even the biggest ordinary dictionary. In one or two cases even the experts on Dr Federico Siles's team of dialectologists in Lugano could not be quite certain what a particular word might have meant. Yet that too reinforces the vividness and immediacy of these stories. As the great Swiss historian Johannes von Müller once observed, "places are not big or small because they take up space on a map; it depends on their spirit".

The indeterminacy of Amiel

Georges Poulet

Switzerland is notable not only for the practical wisdom and virtue of its inhabitants, but also for their propensity to withdraw into the solitarious conduct of their mental lives, and to live as easily in the inwardness of their thoughts as in the diverse, well-balanced activities of their public life. It sometimes happens that this wholly inner life is taken to extreme lengths: such is the case with Henri-Frédéric Amiel.

In his *Journal*, in the entry dated September 4, 1863, Amiel reports as follows:

Je ne sais rien, je ne suis rien, et il me faut me reconstruire chaque jour. Cette absence de partitipris, de caractère, d'habitudes, de conviction, ce défaut de substance positive, de résultat acquis, de capital réalisé, et même de forme déterminée dans la volonté et dans l'esprit, me rendent indéfinissable et font un faible pratique.

This is perhaps the most important of Amiel's findings concerning himself – or at any rate of the initial findings – the one which must stand, logically, before all others, for from it flow all others, on it depend all others. From the outset his thinking is condemned to being forever unable to settle on any one precise object. Not that, like the thinking of so many others, it drifts away gradually into muddle or imprecision, into a sort of slackness of mind which would leave it hovering endlessly, ready to give in to any chance inclination. On the contrary, Amiel never allows himself to be taken over by any particular idea. He eludes all fixations. He depends on no precise orientation, no deliberate choice formed by thought. Thought is reduced to nothing more than an exercise of total intellectual freedom – so total that it could never allow itself to be caught even momentarily by any definite form; a thinking, therefore, of which it could be said that it was strictly indefinable, since it aspires to a state in which it is not determined in advance by any object whatever. More even than that, it is a thought which attains true satisfaction, or the deepest satisfaction for the person thinking it, only when, free of any precise intention, it is nothing other than a thought thinking itself in *vacuo*; an activity which requires only that it be present to itself, without this self-awareness registering any need for relation to any definable object, external or internal.

In this absolute internalizing of the mind's activity one might find something comparable to the poetic reverie of some of the German Romantics (Novalis, for example), but with the difference that in Amiel self-awareness is not concerned even with what might be called the poetry of the inner world, but is content to be no more than a permanently functioning mirror for that life (reflecting not necessarily its "poetic" quality but simply the anonymous, impersonal and almost continuously abstract nature of the activity). The intellectual freedom at issue, then, has nothing positive about it; it brings no affirmation of being. Rather it could be said to record the lack, within being, of any true personality.

Having no definite inclination and no wish to have one, Amiel discovers that he is free to take up – or to give up – any and every inclination in turn. Nothing is inevitable in this mental activity proceeding within itself, to all appearances, endlessly. It has no goal, no end. It merges with the many daily changes that a vast, intimate journal will reveal. That is all that it knows: for its frame is not the real but the possible.

As the *Journal* unfolds, of course, certain more or less distinct eventualities are given consideration. But they are considered from a long way away rather than genuinely confronted. Whether or not they actually come about, they must be considered "as a real rather than as a possible"; they belong in the domain of the possible. "This can be seen in the way Amiel approaches situations. Frequently, when he does so, 'it will be in the interrogative mode, just like Panurge: Shall I do this or shall I do that?' One hypothesis follows another, one set of possibilities gives way to another that is utterly different. One person, by name Amiel, takes the place of another bearing the same name, but quite unlike him. And so Amiel never is Amiel, or he is an Amiel perpetually

aware of his own metamorphoses. He even boasts of being a sort of Proteus. At other moments he laments the fact. With effortless ease he slides from one mode of being (and of being aware of being) to another. He knows that his true nature is to elude all definition.

This is the consequence of the extreme freedom with which he behaves – not perhaps in the real world, which concerns him not at all, but in the field of pure thought. In essence, but also as the result of sedulous practice, he is a being suited to the unwearying exploration of the manifold possible. Then again, detachment or uninvolvedness in Amiel are never aimed at procuring gratification. He could not be further removed from an Epicurean. Nothing in him could resemble the ultimately rather cynical behaviour of a dilettante like Gide, who withdraws from this or that pleasure the better to enjoy some other one. For in Amiel there is a moral seriousness, a gravitas, Protestant in nature, which forbids such play. The intellectual freedom which he displays is of a different kind. Its origins, in Amiel's own rather banal phrase, lie in "un besoin d'indépendance"; although he goes on to say that this is dictated by "la crainte de livrer sa liberté aux circonstances, aux hommes, aux passions et obligations". The same holds, we know, for Amiel's attitude to marriage; but then it holds for all his dealings with every kind of social grouping – the family, the world of politics, the worlds of scholars or of socialites. All are held in suspicion, kept at a distance. Thus he writes: "J'ai vécu plus libre qu'un souverain, m'attachant à ne dépendre d'aucune volonté et renonçant à toute autorité."

These quotations bring out the radically negative stamp of Amiel's thought. True freedom is available only to him who escapes the influence of the external world, so fashioning for himself a totally independent mode of life and thought – one in which, above all, he is safe from even the faintest of determinations. For then the being thus freed finds himself beyond the pull of the external world. He accedes to impersonality; something confirmed by Amiel in this other passage: "Ma liberté est privative, négative, elle consiste... à se réfugier dans l'existence impersonnelle de la pensée" (February 14, 1855). In another entry we read: "At-je un goût dominant? Je n'en trouve qu'un, celui de la liberté intérieure, c'est-à-dire l'instinct de m'affranchir de tout penchant déterminé" (May 14, 1861). This passage stresses the important point that the spirit of independence Amiel speaks of here takes the form, in his case, not only of the distance which he strives to set between determinations arising in the external world and inner peace, but also of a positive desire to bring about that peace by way of indeterminacy. Is it not thanks to indeterminacy that the freedom intermittently enjoyed by Amiel, escaping now and then from the inexorabilities of the external world, allows him to attain a state comparable to what constitutes the essence of divine freedom? "L'indétermination", he writes on January 18, 1865, "consiste à éluder la condition humaine pour sauver une sorte d'indépendance divine."

Which is to say that human freedom, on the model of divine freedom, can become non-finite. But will freedom thus conceived, insofar as it concerns only man, not tend to remain finite, useless? "Liberté dont je ne fais rien", confessed Amiel in a passage from his "Déclarations sur les femmes" (September 4, 1866) – a freedom with which, in this particular case, he indeed does nothing, for at that time it seems to him unthinkable. Do we not see something similar in the following entry: "C'est dans le zéro que j'ai cherché ma liberté" (June 25, 1856)? Must he not mean here that freedom, a negative thing, cannot be distinguished from the sort of nothingness from which it springs? Fortunately, as he learned from Oken, one of his German Romantic friends, Amiel is well aware that zero is simply the first and the richest in potential of all numbers. Then again, zero, not being itself a number, being nothing, is a prodigious mental space, characterized by Amiel as at once "neutre et libre" (December 24, 1873). If his beloved *libre* merges with zero, that is to say with a thought that is null in itself and yet open upon everything capable of occupying space within it, then freedom and awareness are identical. A consciousness which is utterly bare

but limitless may perhaps contain a mental space that is also without limit. "Mon Moi n'est que la nue conscience", Amiel writes. But he at once adds: "Mon dénuement est virtualité pure" (September 6, 1877). This inaugurates an inexhaustible relationship between freedom and consciousness, summarized by Amiel when he writes: "Liberté intérieure, conscience de la conscience" (April 7, 1869). At this point consciousness, raising itself to a higher plane, is no longer consciousness of any specific thing but only of itself; it is no longer to be differentiated from freedom borne up and along by virtuality, protected against any contact with the real. The experience of infinite freedom and that of bare (or pure) thought become one.

But let us be clear that this fusion has no bearing for Amiel the man. It means that when thought works free of any relation with the thought determinate, it reaches a level where it can move untrammelled. It then becomes consciousness of consciousness, that is to say a consciousness endowed with a degree of freedom such that it ceases to be the consciousness of one particular being, for individual consciousness is left behind at this level. Here it must be pointed out how close Amiel is to Valéry. For both, undetermined thought (pure thought, Valéry will say) often goes forward within a mental activity that is contemplative. "Mon instinct contemplatif", Amiel writes, "voudrait supprimer en soi l'individualité et n'être plus que simple conscience, que pur esprit" (May 17, 1870).

And indeed, allowing for one or two (admittedly important) nuances, such a sentence could be ascribed to the author of *Charmes* and of the *Cahiers*. One thinks of Valéry's "pure I", apex of the pyramid of I which Valéry gradually climbs in order finally to arrive at a form of consciousness so utterly depersonalized that it is no longer consciousness of this or that, but a sort of supreme exercise of thought itself, freed from any connection with any object. Is it not this which marks the consciousness of Amiel, at any rate in one of its later stages? A con-

sciousness which achieves detachment by deliberately widening the gap that separates it from objects to which, at the start, it feels connected; a consciousness which reaches full awareness of itself in an ever-growing solitude: "Mon esprit devient toujours plus esprit... toujours plus pauvre de toute richesse acquise, toujours plus fluide, plus formable, plus neutre et plus indéterminé" (October 20, 1870). "La marche de mon développement a toujours été dans le même sens: l'indétermination croissante de l'être..." (September 19, 1864). "Toute matière se sépare graduellement de ma conscience profonde, dont l'énergie critique réduit toujours son bagage et revient à l'état ponctuel du sujet isolé de tout objet" (October 20, 1870).

The condition of a subject with no object. Few expressions in Amiel are so powerful and so profound. Few expressions describe so aptly the near-paradoxical transformation which, almost at the end of the progression, takes place in the indeterminate consciousness of Amiel. All consciousness (even long before Husserl) has always been described as involved with an object. Any other position would have seemed inconceivable. Yet here, in a new perspective, what appears – if not as something immediately visible, then at any rate as the last and perhaps highest level of consciousness – is a subject no longer involved with anything, not even itself; a consciousness presented as a subject without an object.

With this, unquestionably, we reach what Amiel considers to be the most absolutely indeterminate thought: a thought which has no definition, which cannot be defined since what it thinks has connection with nothing. Thought thinks the nothing. It thinks itself in the absence of any thought-object whatsoever. In its absolute isolation, denudation, non-definition, it is witness to the lack within itself of any form of determination.

An indeterminacy which extends in all directions, which reappears at all points and which, in the end, as in Buddhism (for which Amiel has such reverence), is revealed as the only

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means through which the real nature of substance can be expressed: "J'arrive à la conscience indéterminée de la substance", writes Amiel, adding to this phrase the following brief quotation from Virgil: "inania regna" (May 10, 1859).

The territory of the indeterminate consciousness, then, is the emptiest region of the mental world. To find one's way there is to find oneself utterly cut off. But it is also to find oneself in one's true greatness. "Ma conscience", Amiel writes, "s'aperçoit dans sa substance même, supérieure à toute forme" (August 31, 1856). And so it is by turning his back on all objective reality, by eliminating, in the space within the space surrounding him, the distinct forms of objective reality that, at moments at least, Amiel can find a kind of pride in the spiritual poverty which, like the mystics, he achieves by voluntary privation. This pride shows through again in the somewhat enigmatic saying which he puts down one day, with himself in mind: "L'indétermination, dans la désespérance, c'est le point où se maintient ton être central..." (September 12, 1876). Amiel's despair must be seen as an act of renunciation: whether of the world as known through the senses, or of personal inclinations, or of any and all forms which determinate thought may take, in order to come through to what is, if not the goal, at least the concluding act of spiritual activity. Then thought, abstracting everything, emptying itself of everything, reaches the point where, solitary, it thinks itself with the perfect purity achieved by the eliminating of all determinacy.

This is the highest point reached by Amiel. But that point is also the start of a downward slope. Just how steep it is, Amiel will often and painfully discover when, instead of considering the eminently positive nature of his sacrifices, he feels the full force of the privation they entail. Thus, in a note directed at himself, he writes: "Tu es un Moi, non une personne, une forme, non une substance. Tu n'as ni caracté-

rière, ni opinion, ni projet, ni carrière, ni détermination quelconque, et cela de moins en moins. C'est-à-dire que tu n'es rien qu'une possibilité, une virtualité, une chose vide, et non pas un être" (September 30, 1858).

This is the first catastrophe that befalls anyone seeking the ultimate refinement of his thought by way of the elimination of every kind of determination; it is the sort of illness which strikes at the very structure of the mind, that is, its forms. These, because of his efforts yet also in spite of them, will weaken, soften, lose substantiality: "Je rentre toujours plus dans l'informe" (October 8, 1869). "Je ne suis que formabilité sans forme" (April 6, 1859). "Je me dépouille en quelque sorte de mes organes et rentre dans l'état amorphe, dans la forme générale et vide de la spiritualité" (May 18, 1859). "Je suis semblable à la matière informe et vide sur laquelle se mouvait l'esprit de Dieu" (July 8, 1858).

Nor does the falling away stop there. It moves outwards in all directions, it affects everything. Not only, as was inevitable, does it bring about deterioration in the sharpness of thought itself, but it makes that thought itself vaguer, more confused. At first it is the objects of thought which are affected, but then – and this is infinitely more serious – it is the subject itself, that is, the process of thought. Functioning as it were *in vacuo*, it finds itself buried beneath a sort of fog. At first the fog rises round and about it, but, at a later stage, within it: "Tu n'es plus rien qu'un brouillard triste, sans forme et sans direction" (April 23, 1872). "Je m'aperçois moi-même comme les fantômes à l'aube..." (April 19, 1879). "Je rentre moi-même dans l'informe et le fluide, dans le monde vague de la possibilité et de l'impossibilité" (October 31, 1880). "Je suis un nuage qui prend toutes les formes et toutes les couleurs" (October 14, 1857). "Je n'existe que vaguement..." (November 23, 1856). "Je reviens de moi-même à l'état fluide, vague, indéterminé" (August 14, 1869).

The vague and the indeterminate have become synonymous. A thought which renounces precise objects, which strives to become perceptible to whoever thinks it in the absence of all form, runs the risk of losing itself, not necessarily in emptiness, but in amorphousness: a word which signifies not only absence of form but absence of substance.

Speaking for nature

Robin Buss

PHILIPPE JACCOTTET
A travers un verger
100pp. 66fr.
207 0702219
La Semblance: 1954-1979
280pp. 95fr.
207 0701565
Paris: Gallimard.

Philippe Jaccottet, cultivated austerity. The three short texts of *A travers un verger*, complemented by the selections from his notebooks in *La Semblance*, record his delight in the richness of the natural world and his mistrust at the delight he takes in recording it: "Méfie-toi des images. Méfie-toi des fleurs."

There is no coldness about his restraint. On the contrary, Jaccottet welcomes us to his most intimate thoughts, while at the same time writing the opposite of confessional literature. The notebooks cover the period from 1954 to 1979, but hardly any of the passages he has retained could be dated on internal evidence and one searches in vain for any facts about the poet's life or signs of his reaction to external events during those twenty-five years. He studies the changing seasons, especially the effects of light and colour on familiar landscapes; this provides the context for his meditations. From time to time, a book, a concert, a visit or a death (Jean Paulhan, Picasso) is noted, but in the main he is suspicious of these intrusions of the particular on his quest for the universal. He reacts characteristically to the death of Picasso with a reflection on the vacuity of modern culture.

Jaccottet returns repeatedly to *La Semblance* to the poets he admires, Hölderlin, Leopardi, Rilke, discreetly present in the dialogue, as

Thought is in danger of being swallowed up by this. And that is indeed the impression that Amiel's *Journal* often gives: not that of a lack, but that of a plenitude that is made up of an overwhelming number of entities which have remained in or fallen back into formlessness. There they lie, a lifeless wrack stretching as far as the eye can see, with not the faintest chance of ever forming anything coherent. But, let it be said at once, that judgment is in one respect unfair. It takes no account of a fact which is patent: that in Amiel vagueness is not a terminal condition but a sort of staging-post between the primary state of withdrawal and something I have not yet mentioned and which is logically situated beyond vagueness: incompleteness, unresolvedness, fluidity – that is to say, total opacity.

This total obscurity is not reached in a single moment. Before he comes through to it, Amiel, in the sort of engulfment he feels himself sliding into, can still find a chance to strike out for a place which is almost stable, which might well seem to him like the end of his quest and in which he could hope to find temporary refuge or, better still, the opportunity to renew his drive and momentum.

This intermediate state is what Amiel often calls the foetal or germinal state. "Par une simplification croissante, se réduire à l'état de germe..." (*Grains de mil*). "Etat de l'oeuf où la vie va germer..." (August 31, 1856). "Le monde des germes, des larves, des fantômes..." (January 3, 1871). "Retour à la sémence..." (August 31, 1856). "Etats mystérieux et crépusculaires qui ramènent à l'état d'indivision de l'être, à peu près à l'état foetal" (October 16, 1864).

All these expressions, scattered across the *Journal*, form a host of convergent allusions which tend to suggest what might seem to be the final locus of his quest: the locus from which thought, recovering foothold or handhold, would feel ready to set out again – this time, in the opposite direction – on the road already travelled. For the embryonic or foetal life is not a *terminus ad quem* but a *terminus a quo*. After the stage of in-folding there would be the stage of what he sometimes calls unfolding, that is to say, a redeployment of being which would in fact be a genesis. Thus Amiel dreams sometimes of changing into the diver in the fable, who, after venturing to the depths of

establishes with them, as, for example, when he quotes Leopardi's disparaging comment on Romantic literature: "Dans la poésie antique, c'est la nature qui parle; dans la poésie moderne... c'est le poète." The notebooks, like the fragments or drafts of poems that he includes with them, amount to the record of an unceasing effort to provide a voice for nature, while *A travers un verger* continues "ces recherches toujours menacées de précipitation", profoundly aware of the dead hand which literature imposes on the work of organizing and refining the raw data of experience.

At times, he is obsessively meticulous in his mistrust of literature and art, turning on himself, in "Les Cormorans", to castigate his "unreason" in using these black birds as an image of death and refusing to celebrate Franz Hals's work in the Haarlem museum as a human achievement, when he has just affirmed how it might be considered, as such. Indeed, the second section of "A travers un verger" is a critique of the first, undermining its own thesis in an agonized repudiation of the writer and his craft.

Qu'ils disent légers ou qu'ils disent lourds, les mots ne sont jamais que des mots. Facile. A certains moments, devant certains réalités, ils m'irritent, on les sent font borborygmes; et moi à travers eux, qui continue à m'en servir, cette façon d'être assis à une table, les dos tournés aux autres et au monde, et de n'être plus capable, à la fin, que de cela.

Always present, against his will, in what he writes, he shies away from his own image with an almost neurotic distaste.

"Almost, but not quite. The poet, not yet made one with nature, is able to meet it through the experience of ageing and the anticipation of death. "L'étonnement et l'horreur d'être détruit". His mastery of language presents him, at every turn, with the opportunity for self-indulgence, which he rejects, less

the sea, makes ready to come back up, laden with treasure found on the bottom. Amiel's enterprise might in this way be compared with those works obsessed with the topic of origins and of which we in France can find an admirable version in the poetry of Maurice de Guérin. But it is striking that in Amiel there is hardly any trace of this upward movement. Seldom do we see him apprehend and describe the slow, progressive movement which, in living creatures, drives the vital juices upwards.

It appears, then, that Amiel is condemned to pursue, in ever more distant regions, a search which has no end, which settles on no definite object. For what is perhaps most essential in the searcher's thought is that truth is not to be found in the finite, the determinate, but infinitely short of that, in what we may call the indefinite. Indeterminacy can never be absolute. For whoever immerses himself in this search, there is always, at a yet deeper level of thought, a more thoroughgoing indeterminacy towards which he must at all costs strive. Hence the interminable quality of this search in which, in the very words Amiel used in his *Cours d'anthropologie*, man appears forever as "se retirant dans ses profondeurs" (March 22, 1852).

Concentrated solely in this direction, the diarist's thinking "replonge de cercle en cercle jusqu'aux ténèbres de son être primitif" (*Grains de mil*). A search that knows no term, except, perhaps, Nothing.

Let me end with two quotations. The first is entirely negative and pessimistic: "Ma dépouille de toutes ces incarnations de plus en plus vagues, je me suis laborieusement rapproché du Rien" (April 23, 1860).

The second, on the other hand, is positive, or at any rate allows a glimpse of what, in the ordinary way, is least to be found in Amiel's thought – the virtue of hope: "Le néant intérieur, cette indétermination complète, ressemble au réveil qui suit une profonde léthargie" (August 29, 1872).

The complete text of Henri-Frédéric Amiel's *Journal Intime* is being published by L'Age d'homme in Lausanne. Six volumes have appeared to date, and are available at 95 Sw fr each; Volumes Seven to Twelve are still in preparation.

evidently, from any innate puritanism than from the understanding that the Romantic enchantment with language and urge to confess are a form of disguise (and self-deception with it). His restraint is therefore exemplary and one ends by finding and admiring Jaccottet in his single-minded pursuit.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Thomas Baker (1656-1740): whereabouts of books owned by Baker; also of MSS, letters to or from him (outside the British Library, Cambridge University Library, the Bodleian and Durham University Library).

F. Korsten.
Cambridge University Library, West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DR.

Anthony Anthony, Surveyor of the Ordnance at the Tower of London, 1549-63: whereabouts, if still in existence, of the original manuscript of his journal, not cited since the beginning of the eighteenth century; for a reconstruction of the journal from the transcripts by Stow, Burnet, Ashmole *et al*; also information about Ashmole's whereabouts on November 16, 1659, when he made his copy.

Gary Hill.

The Queen's College, Oxford.

Anne Brulé for the Clarendon edition of Agnes Grey. (1) Origin of the phrase "the flower of the flock" (ch 2, p405 in the Everyman edition); the phrase is used by George Palsman in his *Memoirs* (London, 1764, p74). (2) The origin of what is apparently a quotation in this sentence (about the human heart; ch13, p477): "If little more than nothing, will disturb it, little less than all things will suffice, to break it."

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More information, please, appears on page 141.

To play the porcupine

Clive H. Church

JOHN MCPHEE
The Swiss Army: La Place de la Concorde
130pp. Faber. £7.95.
0 571 13484 X

The peace and prosperity of Switzerland is a human creation, not a gift from Providence, and as such has to be ceaselessly protected and adapted. The price of being boring, as well as of being free, is eternal vigilance. There is therefore, among the Swiss, an unusual awareness of the fragility of their present existence and a concern to preserve it from the uncertain temper of the world.

This vigilance is not just a matter of rapid response to changes in the market place. It is a military affair. Switzerland is both the least militaristic nation in Europe and one of the most militarized. Whereas carrying a weapon is usually an indictable offence in Britain, in Switzerland civilians can be seen cycling to the supermarket with sten guns slung across their backs. The military system is totally intertwined not just with the concept of Switzerland as an independent and neutral state, but with the very fabric of Swiss life.

Yet while there has been a good deal of interest in Britain in the way the Swiss are providing an ultimate line of defence for themselves with abundant nuclear shelters, little thought has been given to the front line of defence, the fact that Switzerland is also a nation at arms in which almost the whole of the active male population are trained soldiers. The Swiss have developed a comprehensive and proactive system for maintaining national security or *Landesverteidigung*. This involves strategic economic provision, psychological preparation for crisis, intensive civil defence and large-scale military resistance. All this is to ensure that the nation shall not merely continue to exist, but can preserve its essential nature, come what may. Though other neutrals may be able, on paper, to mobilize as many men, no other country has such a well established and pervasive military system. Given this, it is surprising that, in time of vigorous debate about the future diplomatic and military course to be followed by Western Europe, paid so little attention to the Swiss example.

This may be because it is too realistic, too weighty, and too inclined to call for individual

sacrifices. For, though there are only 1,500 professional soldiers, plus 18,500 recruits, under arms at any one time, the Swiss can mobilize 625,000 men, if not more, at a few hours' notice. They only do this by requiring adult males to devote one year of their lives between the ages of twenty and fifty to soldiering. The year is made up of seventeen weeks basic training and frequent exercises, refresher courses and inspections: first in the élite, and then in the second and third lines of the *Landwehr* and *Landsturm*. Even after fifty there are obligations still, for officers must serve longer and most men acquire civil defence responsibilities. So there may be 480,000 para-military personnel available to the state.

Although all this is resolutely defensive in nature, and in line with the recognition in international law that neutral countries must prevent any abuse of their territories and take all possible precautions to prevent any belligerent overwhelming them, it is none the less expensive. If the Swiss spend less of their GNP on their army than do most members of Nato, they still devote a fifth of total government expenditure to it, which is twice as much as in Britain. At more than £270 per head of the population per annum, the Swiss carry a heavier burden than that of most Nato populations, and one only a quarter less than in Britain. On top of this there are the facilities provided by the soldiers themselves, and their employers. These burdens are accepted, not just because of the peace of mind they purchase, but also because of the skills, leadership and training the army develops and especially because of the sense of community and shared values it engenders. As Machiavelli said, "The Swiss have no army. They are an army."

Much, if not all, of this comes out in John McPhee's new book, which will be a welcome addition to the very thin coverage presently available in English. It will be particularly welcome because it complements the more formal approach of studies such as that in the *Defence Forces of the World* series by looking at the experience of being a soldier in the Swiss infantry. McPhee does this through a series of lively, if somewhat uncoordinated, vignettes of observations and dialogues drawn from his time as a member of the French-speaking *Renseignements* patrol exercising in the Upper Valais. The task of such sections is to provide intelligence for the rest of the army, not so much on enemy movements, as on the terrain in which their mother units would have to operate: where are the best observation points, is

that bridge mined, and how quickly can men be got up that *téléphérique*? Because the sections have to process the information and then persuade their superiors to accept it, their tasks call for more initiative and less bull than in other parts of the army. They therefore attract oddballs, whom McPhee not only finds sympathetic, but from whom he can draw an amusing and revealing picture of the Swiss army: how it sees its tasks, the facilities on which it can draw to carry them out, and the echoes it offers of current political and social concerns.

Its task is, in the event of war, to enable Switzerland to play the porcupine and ensure that the army bristles sufficiently to cause any invader, who has not already been deterred from the venture, to think at least twice about continuing the advance. Second-line troops would begin resistance at the frontier, even seeking to defend exposed points like Basel. Then the élite troops would hold out for as long as possible in a mobile defence of the central lowlands. Only if this failed would the army fall back on carefully prepared positions in the Alps from which it would be amazingly difficult for an enemy to wrinkle it out without suffering disproportionate losses. All this would be accomplished by professional soldiers rather than by civilian guerrillas, and the claim is that "we will never absolutely give up".

To enable them to do this they can rely, not just on plentiful equipment, but on sophisticated installations and defences, including three major fortresses in the Alps, specially prepared fields of fire in the woods, and the famous demolition points on key bridges and roads. Moreover, the army not merely has the advantage of its knowledge of its chosen terrain but of a remarkably strong *esprit de corps*. McPhee's strength is in his reportage of all this and in his sympathy with the patrol.

This picture may sound a little too good to be true. And, in fact, McPhee does reveal problems – shortage of equipment, notably tanks; training which is too short, and which is not always taken seriously, because either people do not see the value of it, or regard it as

a subsidized day out with the boys; and boots which sound as fallible as those exposed in the Falklands. There is also some evidence that the political role of the army is not quite as unchallenged as his subtitle suggests, with its evocation of a central geographical feature, where a number of avenues of ice come together near the *Grosser Aletschgletscher*: "the place that will never be defended represents what the Swiss defend".

In fact the army can exacerbate language differences and social élitism. For while all officers have to rise from the ranks, a surprisingly large number of them are involved with big business. This is one of the reasons why there is some resentment of the way in which the army helps to induce a somewhat conformist frame of mind, one totally opposed to conscientious objection. Nor is Switzerland's neutrality always taken at its face value. The Russian view of Switzerland as what McPhee nicely terms "a kind of capitalist Alamo" is born out by the fact that the "Redlanders" are always the aggressors in training exercises.

Questions such as how convincing is Switzerland's diplomatic stance, and how credible her deterrence are usually only touched on in passing by one of the somewhat staccato, and often unattributed, quotations of which McPhee makes much use. The result is stimulating, if a little imprecise, but not terribly reflective. Neither his own views, nor those of Swiss outside the charmed circle of the army, are really explored. This tangential handling of quite serious questions is one of a number of points at which the transition from a series of articles in the *New Yorker* to book form has not done McPhee's insights full justice. He does get inside the Swiss army in a way few writers have done before, but does so at the cost of leaving unexamined the wider dimensions of neutrality and militarization. So we still do not know whether the Swiss concept of a nation at arms is fully credible or transferable.

The Swiss Army will be published on January 21, 1985.

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Eric Korn

Quaritch Catalogue 1.043 (*Four Centuries of English Books*) has something for everyone, that is, with impeccable taste and an irreproachable income. What I should most like to be, I reflected, is a small newly independent Anglophone (or at least Anglophoneophile) territory (preferably tropical but without a termite problem), with an offshore oil well and a new moisture-controlled National Library (you must know the place, the building with the cool poricoed front and the water garden, just off 29th of February Boulevard) with many large empty display cases waiting to be filled, just the place, surely, for that uncut, unworn, wonderfully bright copy of Keats *Poems* 1817 in original boards, rather than in the safe of some anal-retentive American bibliograb . . .

Enter Assistant Professor Luther Keelhauser of William Carlos College, Williams, Tennessee. He speaks: Just hold on a minute there. I hoped this column was free of that obtrusive, jeering anti-Americanism that is England's besetting vice. Why American? Why not (for example and without prejudice) "in the safe of some anal-retentive Australian"?

Myself: Yes, I hoped so too. Because "safe" is, or so I am told, rather faded Australian slang for a male contraceptive. Shall I continue?

Quaritch relates, apropos the Keats, that "one of the better sonnets is 'On first Looking into Chapman's Homer'". I should have thought prospective purchasers would probably know that, having a well-thumbed Penguin Keats with underlinings and marginal ticks and pencilled "this is very fine", before getting ready to pony up \$12,500, but maybe someone is expressing a personal preference. On the subject of marginalia, wouldn't you like the magazine publication of Ruskin's *Munera Pulveris*, the parts gathered and collected and bound by Ruskin himself for Thomas Dixon, Ruskin's proletarian friend from Sunderland, the addressee of *Time and Tide Wait for Me* and *Tyre*, with the foreign words, translated and with endearing annotations: "Carlyle liked this bit", "A very favourite bit of mine - it makes

me lick my lips whenever I read it", or simply "Well Done, J. R."? (If I were a badge that said "Well Done, J. R." would people understand me?)

An equally succinct marginal comment is Izaak Walton's on John Chalkhill, whose "Pastoral History" of *Thealma and Clearchus* Walton posthumously edited. Chalkhill (long thought to be a fictitious persona dreamed up by Izaak, but recently substantiated by a bundle of MSS) got only part-way through the poem, as far as the incomplete line "Thealma lives . . ." and wrote no more; "And here the Author dyed and I hope the reader will be sorry", concluded Izaak.

Quaritch annotations, also, are rarely otiose, a relief after recent catalogues which tell you that *Principia Mathematica* was a jolly important book, especially if you were interested in gravity. Nor do they clog pages with impressive-sounding collational formulae, the foundations of bibliographical knowledge and like foundations best buried, and lists of authorities. If you choose to record all the libraries that catalogue copies of a certain book, all the bibliographers that have mentioned it, you can get an impressive list of obscure names, and of course the commoner the book, the more impressive the list of authorities. What doth it profit a man to know, for example, that Reverend Erasmus Yeo's *Some Old Somerset Cider Recipes* (Station Bookstall Press, Frome) is listed in Ahasuerus's *Bibliotheca Malarum*, in Gongoresco's *A West-County Bookshelf*, and gets a whole chapter in the University of Kamakura's monumental *Check-list of the Works of Congregational Divines*?

Quaritch go rather for the snazzy, slightly tendentious cross-heading: "The epitome of Baconianism", "A Cornerstone of Romanticism", "The beginning of Feminism". The last of these is Ester Sovernam's *Ester hath hang'd Haman: or an Answer to a lewd Pamphlet, entitled, The Arraignment of Women. With the Arraignment of lewd, idle, froward, and vinous Men, and Husbands* (London 1617); I should have dated the beginning of Feminism some millennia earlier.

But they can be modest: there's a letter from Daniel Defoe to one Captain Thomas Bowrey, with notes by Bowrey about the island of Juan Fernandez ("goats, Plenty . . . Ye fat of ye young Seals good as Olive Oil . . ."); "perhaps by coincidence", Quaritch murmur, coolly or coyly, "the island of Alexander Selkirk's marooning and the original of Robinson Crusoe's desert isle".

They are definitely coy with Lionel Johnson, whose *Poems* 1895 they offer: "inimaculate", they say, "phenomenally bright and fresh" (the copy not the text), and even "We don't use the word 'mint' but if we did . . .". Are they just trying to cover up that this is merely the second issue of the first edition, indeed actually a second edition? Hardly, for they also have the first issue, the true first edition, one of only twenty-five copies, and not just one of twenty-five copies, but Number One of twenty-five copies, offered together with Number One of thirty copies of the first, large-paper, Japanese vellum issue of Dowson's *Verses* 1896, a presentation from Dowson to the publisher Leonard Smithers. Quaritch go, it must be admitted; mildly a-pe over this pair, a sort of do-it-yourself complete Nineties' kit, "the rarest and yet most representative volumes" (how's that for riding two horses at once?), with much enthusiasm for quotation-laden, terrible-film-title-laden, "Cynara" (which Quaritch would prefer us to refer to always by its correct title of "Non sum qualis eram Bonae sub Regno Cynarae") and all its accompanying wine and roses. Two for the price of one, or rather two for the price of about twelve hundred litres of a modest Rioja and a few hundred Mrs Minivers.

At this level of desirability, price becomes the least interesting thing about a book: is \$30,000 a lot or a little for an enormous large-paper copy of the first issue of *Gulliver's Travels*, given that the Kern copy ("a quarter of an inch taller than ours, but an eighth of an inch narrower") made \$17,000 in auction in 1929, when the price of a cup of coffee was twelve to fifteen times less? It is interesting to observe, however, that the price of the cheapest book ever published, Richard Horst's *Orion*, the "farting poem" (a farting book has gone from approximately 0.1p to

approximately £300 in just 143 years, a better rate of appreciation (9.2 per cent per annum) than you will get by buying a piece of the action when the Government decides to raffle off the Royal Navy.

More wonders yet: an unrecorded book-seller's fraud - Joseph Beaumont's long and perhaps tedious 30,000 liner, *Psyche* (1652), with a cancel title attributing the poem to Francis Beaumont, fashionable and much more bankable; some amazing letters from Lord Byron to the infatuated and deluded Lady Falkland; even a book that once was mine, the sixteenth-century Italian anthology of elegies for Luigi D'Este containing a verse by the unknown Peter Constable; and finally and most covetably, a calligraphic mock charter used in Lord Burleigh's entertainment for Queen Elizabeth at Theobalds in May 1591, containing a speech composed by Queen Elizabeth herself - a combination that brings out the typefaces Quaritch had been reserving for the signed first issue large-paper (large-stone) Decalogue ("skillfully repaired"): "The ONLY Surviving Prop' from the Elizabethan Theatre. The ONLY Specimen of Dramatic Composition by Queen Elizabeth Herself." Very nice too: there's a large case waiting for it in the entrance hall of the National Archives, and we'll look after it ever so carefully.

In moods of profound depression and inadequacy I cheer myself with the reflection that I can always get a job as a compositor with Mistic Products of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

I've no experience of the printing industry, it is true, but I think that still puts me slightly ahead of the present team at 2463 King Edward Blvd, San Juan, or, as they put it on one of their less successful days, 2463 Kin Edwar Vizd.

Mistic Products of San Juan are in a business that may be unfamiliar to the closeted, rationalist readers of this column. They are one of a number of specialist enterprises that put up unidentifiable powders in small packets with interesting graphics, with instructions as to how to get the best results in the way of suppressing goit or guilt or gangrene, winning lotteries, favours, eternal life, stuff like that. These circulate in market places and *botanas* throughout Central America, and uptown Manhattan.

Packet One (red scythe and sickle surrounding skull, red fist with decisive thumbs-down gesture) contains "Polvos Legitimos de La Guadada Juzgadora", which they translate, accurately for all I can tell, as "Genuine Powder of the Judging Scythe". "Blow it any way the air is blowing", they recommend, "saying: just like I dislodge and blow this Powder of the Judging Scythe, go away from my presence every man or woman that in any are my enemies."

So far so good: no doubt the more sensitive men or women that in any are your enemies will take a powder if urged so pointedly, but on more intimate matters, I have to say that Mistic Products loses its typographic head entirely. This is how they translate Packet Two, "Legitimo Polvo 'Yo domino a mi hombre'", with a sturdy lady in a *fin-de-siècle* chemise and black stockings, stomping a muscular but supple chappie who seems to be trying to guide her right foot up his left nostril:

GENUINE POWER

I COMANMIMAN Put this powder on your body you will come day our men he will always be your lover obediente and satisfied nothing well ever his away MISTIC PRODUCTS.

I'm just back from a most invigorating trip to Mexico: not the Mexico of cactus and cowpat, but a southern, non-Spanish, tropical forested Mexico, of papayas and pyramids, serie Maya-land; And what, or rather who, makes Maya-land mysterious? Almost single-handedly (and I am not forgetting von Däniken, I am not forgetting the sterling contributions of the "Villa Maya" nightplace, with its "furniture of carved wood and desert", and morris-dancers on the steps of a styrofoam zigurat) it has been mystified by José Díaz-Bollio, laureate of Mérida, who has been thinking approaching a full Noi-

son on the Information Services Industry in Yucatán. José lins published "ten books of poems in prose and verse, some of them in Mayan style", he is the author of *Teoría Sobre lo Bello* and "thousands of articles, many on Sociology and Aesthetics, and a Spanish guitar method in which are given more than 400 tune positions". But mainly he is the author of a theory. In 1942 he became aware that the Yucatán Rattlesnake (*Crotalus durissus durissus*) has a pattern on its back which resembles that of many Mayan friezes, and also that the rattlesnake's rattle was the main religious and calendrical symbol of the Mayans, because it grows a new rattle every year. (It doesn't, Díaz-Bollio readily admits, but the Maya thought it did and think so still. "This is the oldest idea I have been able to trace on the American Continent.") Since 1942, Díaz-Bollio has worked on his theory, and now recognizes that Mayan art, Mayan architecture, Mayan calendars and textiles, Mayan religion, Mayan and indeed everyone else's geometry and mathematics all spring from the back and the rattle of *Crotalus durissus*, "the first Pythagoras a very long time before that Greek philosopher lived". He has diagrams to show how the repeat-unit of the diamond-back pattern, a crossed square which he likes to call "The four-vertex canamaye", gives rise to the circle, the pentagon, the Mayan profile, the cosmogonic square whose eight petals represent the moon's phases, the vault, the pyramid, "14 parallelisms with the sun and no less than 16 axes of symmetry", and the first American flag. It also has the gratifying consequence of making the Mayans older and more original than the Aztecs, Olmecs, Incas and Egyptians.

And this is what you get when you innocently buy the *Guide to Uxmal* (Only one containing the theory of Mayan Civilization). It is also what you get if you buy the *Guide to Chichén Itzá*, the *Guide to Tulum*, the *Guide to Copán*, or the *Brief Encyclopaedia of Mayan Civilization*. It is as though all guidebooks to Stratford, Saint Paul's and the Geology Museum were written by Baconian, Satanist Flat-Earthers. It's hard enough to disentangle rubble of pre-Classical, Classical, post-Classical and Toltec ruins, without Díaz-Bollio inventing new names: "Archaeologists erroneously call this flem Dead Serpent, a name that shows how far is Mayan archaeology from its goal . . . Only a person who has never seen the vertebrae of a rattlesnake can commit this mistake."

He has a similarly cavalier way with zoology - "the tails and ears of the jaguars have rattlesnake traits" - and even with measurement: "Size: approximately 216 feet by 150. It is a question why the plaza did not result a perfect square."

Nor is this all. Sitting in a bookstore, idly reading a newspaper story about unfortunate Police Constable Jesus Puc Puc, who, while trying to arrest the notorious disorderly, La Lepra, was surrounded by La Lepra's friends, jostled and stripped of his insignia of rank, I noticed a Mayan Grammar, the very thing I had been looking for for a while. I bought it; later I read in it. The author's preface, by one Zavala, exhorted everyone to learn Mayan, as it was a primitive language, and primitive languages were more perfect than advanced ones like Latin and Greek, having had less time to depart from the standard of perfection set by God when he created the language. This didn't seem to accord with the very latest transformational theories, and when I turned to the list of other publications by the same author (*Teoría Sobre lo Bello, Method of Spanish Grammar, Guide to Uxmal*) it dawned on me that the diabolic José had republished a nineteenth-century grammar in facsimile. Likewise, the *Brief Compendium of Yucatán History* extends only as far as 1910, and contains more lists of Apostolic Nuncios than are now considered fashionable, and the *Explanation of the Mayan Calendar* reprints three fifty-year-old articles. If you want to know what the chips with computers and radio-carbon have done to decipher glyphs and stratigraphy, you had better get your reference sources in London or Mexico City.

Should you discover that these lengths are equal to 6 (6') x 6 (6') feet, or 6' x 6' fathoms, or very nearly the ratio of one to root two, please communicate with José Díaz-Bollio; Apdo Postal 155; Mérida; Yucatán.

Letters

Science and Values

Sir, - Robert K. Merton's article, "Scientific fraud and the fight to be first" (November 2), is concerned with the aspiration to scientific priority. Its main message is that this aspiration "which has reinforced intrinsic motives for advancing the frontiers of scientific knowledge also contains pathogenic components". I agree with this statement and with the arguments behind it. It seems to me, however, that deviant behaviour in science motivated by "the fight to be first" is a secondary role (even if it occurs more frequently now than in the past), and endangers neither the scientific establishment nor its generally accepted mores. The danger, as I see it, lies elsewhere and seems to attract very little attention.

It is commonly observed that most scientists are engaged in parochial science and that their work is of almost no value. Of course they publish papers in a huge number of parochial journals which are never read (fortunately for readers and authors) and rarely reviewed (and then for the sake of completeness rather than with hope of finding a pearl). The very existence of these journals is a by-product of the growing scientific communication network with which they have little in common. The same can be said in respect of many institutions (not only in science but to an even greater extent in the humanities), some of which may have had a glorious past.

One notes here not only a natural process in which some institutions come to the fore while others lose their importance. More distressing is the formation of isolated islands enjoying their separate lives, having their own standards and their own Einsteins. Only the criticism in banking, effectively stifles internal criticism while the outside world remains indifferent to, say, new refutations of quanta or relativity or to correct solutions of outdated problems. The absence of criticism makes the life of a scientist as comfortable as the living conditions on the island allow; the position of a prince is high enough, even if the kingdom is a tiny one. It seems that it is now almost a rule that an institution falling behind never manages to catch up and the only way open to an active scientist is to leave his island and join an institution of real scientific authority. He takes then the risk of entering a more demanding but also a more fascinating world; he must be prepared to face higher standards of research, to be strong-willed and sometimes even brave in the alien environment.

Merton concludes his article by saying that "the abolishing of aspirations can, in its way, be just as damaging as the decay of aspirations to life in civil society". My comment is that nowadays the most damaging role is played by scientific and quasi-scientific aspirations which are confined to one institution or to one country; these parochial aspirations are obviously harmful to the society to which they are confined but they threaten also the indispensable feature of science, its universality.

RYSZARD HERCZYNSKI,
Smotuliska 40m9, 00-095 Warsaw.

Sir, - In his article on modern science and its philosophy (November 2), Gerald Holton makes a number of important points. These points cry out, however, for further development. Professor Holton asks: Do scientists need a philosophy? The answer, I suggest, is that not just scientists, but all of us, urgently need the whole academic enterprise to take up and put into practice a radically new philosophy. For too long academics have unthinkingly accepted that the proper basic intellectual aim of inquiry is to improve knowledge and technology. This philosophy of knowledge is, however, dangerously, harmfully irrational. Knowledge and technology are important; but what the modern world desperately needs, as Holton indicates, is the capacity to resolve its global problems and conflicts more cooperatively and rationally that it does at present. The nuclear arms race, itself exemplifies the kind of suicidal global insanity that can result from technology developed in the absence of rational cooperation.

We need to learn how to act cooperatively - especially on a global scale. Above all, cooperative action requires cooperative discussion

and thought. We cannot hope to resolve our global problems and conflicts unless we have in existence a tradition of cooperative discussion and thought, divorced from power, devoted to helping us achieve these ends. Academic inquiry ought to take, as its basic task, the creation and promotion of this vitally necessary kind of rational, cooperative discussion and thought. It ought to give absolute intellectual priority to the dual tasks of articulating our personal and global problems of living, proposing and critically assessing alternative possible solutions - possible personal and global actions or policies. Knowledge and technology need to be developed in a way that is subordinate and subservient to the basic task of promoting cooperative rationality in the world.

We need, in short, a far-reaching revolution in the basic aims and methods, or "philosophy", of the academic enterprise. What we have is inquiry devoted to the growth of specialized knowledge. What we need is a new kind of inquiry that devotes critical rationalism to the growth of personal and global wisdom in life (wisdom being the capacity to solve problems of living so that what is of value may be achieved - wisdom thus including, but going beyond, knowledge and understanding). Our very survival may well depend on the academic enterprise putting into practice this new philosophy of cooperative wisdom.

NICHOLAS MAXWELL,
Department of the History and Philosophy of Science, University College London, Malet Street, London WC1.

English at Cambridge

Sir, - I would like to protest on behalf of *The Leaves*, edited by Denys Thompson, reviewed so coolly by Graham Hough in your issue of November 23. He remarks that "none of the contributors gives a sober appraisal of the admirable criticism of Leavis's earlier years", but the book is surely not intended to be an assessment of the writings so much as to record personal acquaintance by very different people with the personalities of two critics whose impact on the minds of so many of their contemporaries was of such force that it was often a turning-point, so as to make them of abiding interest even amongst many of us who never knew them personally. Far from being what Professor Hough calls "a melancholy sequence of *Schwärmerei*", I found this book lively and absorbing in its varied points of view of the Leavises.

As for Hough's dismissiveness of *Scrutiny*, I can only reflect my own response to the review, sure that I was far from unusual. I was an undergraduate at Cambridge in its early years, not reading English and unacquainted with the Leavises, but its influence on myself was to awaken me to an interest in literature and in the culture of my time unequalled by any other contemporary criticism I have studied since.

CHRISTOPHER GILLIE,
1 Barton Close, Cambridge.

Sir, - Graham Hough in his review of Hugh Carey's book on Mansfield Forbes suggests that apart from the two chapters on Cambridge English the book was "hardly worth the effort". Manny would have agreed wholeheartedly, but I think he would have been a bit saddened by the description of all his other activities as a "waste of frittering and pottering". After all, no one surely who knows anything about modern domestic architecture would describe the work of Raymond McGrath and Manny at "Finella" in those terms, and what about the exhibiting of Epstein's "Genesis" there? And would Gordon Child have had anything to do with Manny's archaeological enthusiasms if they were a complete waste of time? One could continue on these lines for quite a long time, mentioning things, too, that are not in Carey's book.

Closer to the bone that Professor Hough chews in his narrowly professional capacity are the distracting questions that the memory of Manny's lectures should evoke: What made them "wonderful"? Did it perhaps have something to do with the so-called "frittering"? How many lectures in today's English Faculty, or many lectures in that matter, will be so vividly remembered in fifty years' time? And if the answer is few if any, then why? Would Manny attract any sort of audience nowadays

with lectures that seem to have been so undogmatic and essentially exploratory and for that reason not too easy to follow or take notes from for Tripos use? What has happened to the teaching of so-called "Arts" subjects?

Manny's Cambridge was in many ways "infuriating" no doubt, but is our comparatively soulless and soul-destroying, growth-frosting, frenetically but often dubiously "productive" professional busy-bustle all that much of an improvement?

I hope these remarks will not be wholly attributed to nepotistic loyalty: the fact is that I personally used to find the memories of Manny's brilliance, rightly or wrongly, a bit of an incubus at times. Not that I belong to the English Faculty - thank goodness. The opening remarks of Graham Hough's review look like the sort of nasty little bubble of malice to be expected from that quarter. And why the title "Idols of the Lecture-room", with its Baconian suggestion of illusion and barrenness, as though lectures like Manny's were a hindrance to the progress of English studies? I have not yet met or heard of or read of anyone who thought they were.

DUNCAN FORBES,
Clare College, Cambridge.

Empson and Religion

Sir, - Jonathan Culler in his review (November 23) of William Empson's *Using Biography* seems to have abandoned brains for enthusiasm in endorsing Empson's anti-religious position. Without staying to define "religion" Culler openly associates it with "superstition" and upbraids teachers for ignoring "the historic mission of education: to fight superstition and religious dogmatism". Is it not more important for the educator to define his terms and to use language accurately than to excite himself into a partisan view of any subject whatsoever? I should be very suspicious of Culler's emotional cry to "teachers of literature" to "raise their voices" against what he calls religion.

Empson chose to ignore, in *Milton's God*, the idea of love which binds together the fall and redemption of man in Christian theology; for him, the whole affair was a hateful display of pointless cruelty. That is not how Milton saw the fall of man, and no teacher is doing his job properly who fails to show this. Similarly, one cannot validly (that is, in justice to what the text says) teach *Macbeth* without making clear that the horror of Macbeth's murders is measured in the play by direct reference to a God of justice and a belief in a life hereafter. The impact of *King Lear* is lessened if the reader is not alerted to the challenge which that play offers to faith in an all-merciful God. And so on. One can't alter the fact that literature, because of its concern with many of the same questions as have made up the study of philosophy, has always related to belief in a force outside of human control and understanding. One may, for instance, call Aeschylus' view of this force in the *Oresteia* superstitious if one wishes, but one cannot deny its force as a sympathetic interpretation of human suffering.

In "The Meaning of a Literary Idea", in *The Liberal Imagination*, Lionel Trilling argued that it is not necessary for the reader to share the belief of an author, such as Dante, Milton, or Eliot, in order to read his works with the pleasure proper to the study of literature; Culler would have us think that the reader, on the contrary, must seek out the belief of the author, and if it is religious treat it with scorn. I fail to see how this is any task of the teacher or the literary critic. We are not theologians. If we have a "historic mission" it is not to fight against superstition and religious dogmatism, a description suspiciously close to that used by colonisers about "Popery" in eighteenth-century Ireland. It has to be something both more secular and more humane.

CHRISTOPHER MURRAY,
Department of English, University College, Dublin.
The William Roberts painting used as the cover illustration to the TLS of November 9 is entitled "Parson's Pleasure", not "The Ferry" as was stated in the caption.

The year of Klaus Mann's suicide was 1949, not 1941, as was misprinted in Berthold Spangenberg's letter (November 23).

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THE SELECTED LETTERS OF ANTON CHEKHOV

Edited by Lillian Hellman

Astonishing in their immense range, astounding in their literary quality, the letters of Anton Chekhov are as witty and observant as his great plays and stories. Beginning in 1886 when he was 25, and ending with his death less than twenty five years later, the correspondence testifies to the extraordinary life of this writer who was also a critic, a traveller, a doctor and a patient. Chekhov brings his passions to every subject and reveals himself as a public and private man of conviction and compassion.

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PICADOR

OUTSTANDING INTERNATIONAL WRITING

Just in

COMMENTARY

Caricatures revised

Michael Ignatieff

Crossing the Channel: The Franco-British trade in ideas
ICA

There is, apparently, a philosophy of translation: ie, an inquiry into the difficulties which occur when moving thoughts from one language to another. There ought to be, if there is not already, another field of study: the sociology of misunderstanding, ie, an inquiry into the ways contiguous peoples and cultures manage, with the best intentions in the world, to mistake each other's identities.

The weekend conference at the ICA, sponsored by the *TLS* and the *Quinzaine littéraire*, on the Franco-British trade in ideas would seem to be an ideal case-study for the sociology of misunderstanding. Here are two cultures, barely 300 miles apart, linked since the beginning of each other's national states by ties of friendship, enmity and invidious comparison, who manage, even in the modern world of permeable culture boundaries, to misunderstand each other completely. Misunderstanding is easy to understand when simple dislike engenders mutual caricature. The more difficult case for the sociologists of misunderstanding occurs in a context of mutual admiration and good intention. Such was the case at the ICA. The panels brought together writers and intellectuals from both sides of the Channel who were already reputed experts in mediating between the Gallic and Anglo-Saxon worlds. Misunderstandings in such a gathering were thus more ironic and interesting.

In the session on philosophy, for example, the distance between Paris and London was to be measured not in miles but in light-years. Between Sir Alfred Ayer's amusing but brutal account of philosophy as being about epistemology and not much else, and Christian Descamps's view of the discipline as being about truth as a system of fictions, there could only be a *dialogue des sourds*. In the historical section, on the other hand, there was dialogue – between Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Peter Burke – but it created its own misunderstanding, that the French and English historical professions share the same agenda: *mentalités*, *longue durée*, *structure* instead of *événement* and so on. Had the English interlocutor been Geoffrey Elton, Hugh Trevor-Roper or even A. J. Taylor, the level of mutual disagreement might have been as high as it was in the philosophy section.

In the sessions on literature, literary theory and the socio-political role of the writer, an odd and ironic meeting of minds was achieved with the help of a straw man; Derrida. Because the straw man in question was unable to attend, both French and English writers happily found common ground in dismissing his influence on their work. Yet common agreement to bash a straw man is often only a subtle way of concealing difference. When the writers discussed the more interesting questions – what theories they use in their work, what ideas



Detail of "A Reclining Nymph" by Domenico Beccafumi, on show in Coltragh's exhibition Art, Commerce, Scholarship until December 15.

about narrative, narrator and construction order their creative process – an odd division emerged between the English and French. Salman Rushdie, Malcolm Bradbury, A. S. Byatt and Gabriel Josipovici turned out to have a subtle theoretical line on their own practice, while the French writers – Michel Chailou, François Olivier Rousseau, Jacques Roubaud and Claude Simon – delivered appealing defences of writing as romantic intuition. In the discussion of the writer's social and political role, a similarly unexpected division occurred. Writers from the country of Sartre, Camus and De Beauvoir defended disengagement, while novelers from the country of the Hampstead writer of manners spoke up for activism and commitment. Serge Fauchereau's insistence that writers should be writers first and citizens second struck Salman Rushdie as precious and, at the limit, irresponsible. Whether the divisions on the ICA platform reflect divisions in the wider cultures was of course unclear. Misunderstanding between cultures thrives on the inherent difficulty of answering the question: who is representative?

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 203.
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers to that they reach this office not later than December 28. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date.
Entries, marked "Author, Author 203" on the envelope, should be addressed to: The Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.

1. Thus did I by the water's brink
Another World beneath me think
And while the lofty spacious skies
Revered there should mine eyes
I fancy'd other Realms
Came mine to touch or meet
As by some Puddle I did play
Another World within it lay
2. Do you see the great telephone poles down in the water, how every wire is distended?
If a body fell into the canal it would rest entangled in those wires for ever, between earth and air.
For the water is as deep as the stars are high.
3. The cow and horse tracks in the road were full of water, the rain having been enough to charge them.

but not enough to wash them away. Across these minute pools the reflected stars flitted in a quick transit as the passed; she would not have known they were shining overhead if she had not seen them there – the nearest things of the universe imaged in objects so mean.

- Competition No 199
Winner: Dr O. Boston
Answers:
1. That the highest degree of reverence should be paid to youth, and that nothing indecent should be suffered to approach their eyes or ears, are precepts exhorting by praise and virtue from an ancient writer, by no means eminent for chastity of thought.
Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, 4.
2. A man should not only have his own way as far as possible, but he should only consort with such things that are getting their own way so far as they are at any rate comfortable. Unless for short times under exceptional circumstances, he should not even see things that have been stunted or starved.
Samuel Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*, chapter 21.
3. "Nothing disagreeable should ever be looked at."
Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, book 2, chapter 5.

Hasty history

Peter Kemp

SHAKESPEARE
King John
BBC2

King John is a chronicle of the shifty and the shifting. In it, treacherous potentates haver and vacillate; changes of mood and mind, alterations of allegiance, are routine. Portraying a world of opportunism – one ruthlessly governed by "commodity", that "all-changing word" and "swayer of motion" – it charts the cynical veerings of power-fingers given over to the pursuit of advantage. Luck proves brutally fickle, too: there's much revolving of Fortune's wheel. Amid such portents as a moon seen to "whirl about" the sky, mutability holds sway.

One problem for the producer is that much of this occurs with bewildering rapidity. The play lurches along at too hectic a rate – words like "haste" and "speed" pant through its verse – that it can be hard for an audience's attention to keep pace with the helter-skelter happenings. A further stumbling-block is the almost comic abruptness of decease to which the work's characters are prone: the two central women, Constance and Elinor, are dispatched in just four lines; John contracts a seemingly fatal fever with improbable suddenness; then, before he's had time to expire from it, is promptly poisoned by a murderous monk. Given obstacles like these, the BBC's production, directed by David Giles, represents a very creditable performance. While steadily registering all the play's oscillations, it keeps the action moving briskly along, and – by pointed grouping of characters – ensures that you're never left in doubt about the dubious wheelings and dealings going on.

Matching the play's atmosphere, the sets are vivid and stylized. Interiors consist of heavy arches and massy pillars bedizened with zig-zags, lozenges and hieratic-looking patterns. Exteriors flaunt an archaic panoply – pavilions and pennants under a silky blue sky, emblazoned, in the French scenes, with fleurs-de-lis. Through these settings, the cast swirl in baroque and stylized. Interiors consist of heavy arches and massy pillars bedizened with zig-zags, lozenges and hieratic-looking patterns. Exteriors flaunt an archaic panoply – pavilions and pennants under a silky blue sky, emblazoned, in the French scenes, with fleurs-de-lis. Through these settings, the cast swirl in baroque and stylized. Interiors consist of heavy arches and massy pillars bedizened with zig-zags, lozenges and hieratic-looking patterns. Exteriors flaunt an archaic panoply – pavilions and pennants under a silky blue sky, emblazoned, in the French scenes, with fleurs-de-lis. Through these settings, the cast swirl in baroque and stylized.

A conflict situation

Patricia Craig

WILLIAM MASTROSIMONE
Extremities
Duchess Theatre

Extremities is a play about a rapist on whom the tables are turned. The setting is a farmhouse in New Jersey, shared by three young women. Marjorie, played by Helen Mirren with impressive shifts in manner from neurosis to vulnerability, appears on the stairs not fully dressed. Her first action is to spray some house plants; her second to play a wasp. The wasp is significant. It allows us to see how Marjorie reacts under attack.

The next attacker is rather more dangerous. Marjorie undergoes partial smothering and sexual assault at the hands of Raul (Kevin McNally), who has erupted into her living-room, all noise and bluster. Some unenvying indignities are imposed on the girl by the ranting intruder, before she gets him in the eyes with a jet of insecticide; that leaves Raul disabled for the remainder of the action. What further punishments are in store for Marjorie's unlikely assailant? Minutes later, he is holed up in the fireplace like some unpleasant animal, blinded, trussed up, half garrotted, drenched with boiling water, poked with a broom handle, and whacked at with a spade.

How do you act if you return home innocent, to find your female friend, in her nightclothes, standing guard over a damaged rapist in the fireplace? This is the problem that confronts each of Marjorie's companions, dim-witted Terry (Johanna Kirkby) and brisk Patricia (Marty Crumshank), in turn. They are non-plussed by it, after their initial suggestion of summoning the police has provoked hysteria in Marjorie. Her dilemma is quite simple. She is, in fact, unraped, and unmarked, while the would-be violator himself is blinded, burned,

baric sumptuousness.

Many of the performances are richly textured too. Infusing the character's rather stiff lines with graceful suppleness, Claire Bloom softens the notoriously intractable role of Constance – as rigidly consistent as her name proclaims – into something moving. Not that she sentimentalizes the part, bringing plenty of goaded snarling to the spitting stichomythia of her exchanges with Elinor, played with poisonous aplomb by Mary Morris as a glitter-eyed, leathery-skinned old reptile.

Of much the same species is Richard Wordsworth's formidably lethal Pandolph – wizened and unwinking as, with creepy finesse, he snakes his way through his speeches' twisty arguments. Some of the best scenes in the production are those where he loops coils of equivocation around Charles Kay's bemused King Philip and Jonathan Coy's ambitious, callow Dauphin. Less enthralling is his tussle with King John – largely because Leonard Rossiter's performance of that role isn't very compelling for most of the play. Over-mannered (the King's eyes keep sliding towards his assembled Lords as if trying to coax laughter from a studio audience) and over-fast, it's a rendering in which words are swallowed and lines thrown away – though Rossiter's assurance in the part increases as the play proceeds. Paradoxically, he seems most in command of it in the scenes where John, teetering towards downfall, is at his wobbliest.

Uncertainty in the title role doesn't take the same toll of a production of this work as it would of other Shakespeare history plays, though. Effectually dominating the action is the figure of Coeur de Lion's spirited heir, Faulconbridge the Bastard – designed to offset John's counterfeit kingship by his sterling amalgam of true authority and doughty patriotism. To his bluff, colourful outpourings, at once blunt and acute, George Costigan brings a very engaging verve and trenchancy, in a fresh, forceful performance that never falters right up to the ringing plea for integrity and firmness – an England that "to itself do rest but true" – which concludes this fitfully powerful play about insecurity.

choked, poked, and so on. Mastrosimone here posits a fundamental impasse in the plight of rape victims who may so easily, once the authorities are brought into the matter, find themselves bewilderingly put in the wrong. The age-old charge against violated females, that they asked for it in some obscure or implicit way, continues to arouse contradictory response, at some deep level, in men and women.

Mastrosimone justifiably overstates his case in the interests of dramatic effect: Marjorie very clearly isn't guiltless of an impulse towards violence comparable to her attacker's. Her friends, on her side to begin with, become sufficiently overwrought, in the course of events, to attribute to Marjorie a natural sluttishness which naturally produces a particular effect. They refer to her practice of dressing improperly at all hours of the day. They stop short of voicing the ultimate accusation – no one tells her she's asked for it, but the implication remains. However, Mastrosimone, having diverted sympathy away from his protagonist, retrieves it to some extent by showing us the knife carried about by Raul – the tool of his vicious trade.

While the subject of this drama could hardly be more painful or complex, the way in which it's presented is effectively close to the black-comic manner of *Loaf*. You have the talkative, cajoling, and uttering comic Catholic exclamations: "Holy Mother of Jesus" (Kevin McNally), performs splendidly in this unsavoury part; the vengeful victim clutching her clay hammer; the ineffectual friends, indecisive Terry and Patricia with her social workers' jargon, all the while. The anecdotes which are interspersed in the play are frequently turn-of-mind, or explore abnormal mental states. There is his story, for example, of the quidding issues it raises.

From tortoise into fox

Ian Donaldson

ANNE BARTON
The Queen, Dramatist
JJP, Cambridge University Press, £30
(paperback, £9.95).
0521 258839

In the summer of 1618 Ben Jonson, then in his late forties and already of monumental size, journeyed by foot from London to Scotland. During part of the following winter he stayed just south of Edinburgh with the scholar and poet William Drummond, laird of Hawthornden. Encouraged perhaps by the isolation of the place and also no doubt by generous measures of his host's drink – "one of the elements in which he liveth", noted Drummond shortly – Jonson talked freely about his fellow writers in far-off London. His verdicts were cutting and memorable. "That Donne, for not keeping of accent, deserved hanging. That Shakespeare wanted art. That Sharpham, Bay, Dekker were all rogues, and that Macheval was one. That Abraham Fraunce in his English hexameters was a fool." To a later generation such withering comments were plain evidence of Jonson's malignity, which was routinely contrasted with the spirit of Shakespeare, presumed to be free and generous. But in his casual remarks to Drummond, as in the more considered critical pronouncements to be found throughout his published work, Jonson is seldom cantankerous without a purpose. His critical grenades are carefully lobbed in such a way as to clear for himself a necessary creative space; his strong reactions to the work of his contemporaries are a means of defining and discovering the principles he wished to follow in his own. Jonson is England's first literary critic worthy of the name, yet his critical utterances – like those of his first interpreters: Dryden, Coleridge, Eliot – need constantly to be understood in relation to what he himself was currently attempting as a writer to achieve.

Jonson's dramatic career was a long one, stretching from the last golden years of Queen Elizabeth's reign to the last troubled years of Charles I, and within that long period his dramatic ambitions – and with them, his critical opinions – might reasonably have varied and changed. Yet the conventional view of Jonson's career is linear. He is seen as a steady achiever until around 1616, when he begins inexplicably to droop: there follow what Dryden pleased to call his dotages. Despite this long sagging conclusion to his career, Jonson's creative aims, along with his general outlook on literature and life, are often said to have remained more or less constant throughout his lifetime. This consistency has been outwardly admired but tacitly regretted. Jonson's unchanging, self-contained, fortified world of art seem to lack the imaginative openness, the variety, the readiness for risk that we associate with the greater art of Shakespeare.

Intellectually he may appear not to develop, but merely to decline. In terms of his own dramatic table, Jonson has been perceived by modern critics as the tortoise, not the fox: he thinks of his new tricks, moves by no devious paths, but instead retires within the hard, polished shell of his own dramatic art, his own fortified wisdom.

Anne Barton posits quite a different view both of Jonson's character and of the development of his art. She is unwilling (in the first place) to accept the stable, singular, integrated table of himself that Jonson chose to project, and that modern criticism has often been content to perpetuate. Jonson was a highly complex and contradictory figure, she suggests: psychologically, intellectually and creatively. Many of the critical verdicts which he delivered on Drummond, for example, might seem to contradict the traditional notion of Jonson's moral and aesthetic tastes; of his passion for order, his sense of probability, decorum. Yet the contradictions, with Drummond also reveal much of Jonson's character, the consuming interest in the bizarre, the grotesque, the impossible, the fantastic. The anecdotes which he related to Hawthornden frequently turn on coincidence, or explore abnormal mental states. There is his story, for example, of the quidding issues it raises.

packet of letters that fell overboard from a boat, were swallowed by a fish that was caught at Flushing, and safely delivered in London. There is the story of the gentlewoman divinely obsessed with the Puritan preacher Mr Dod, who asked her husband if she might lie with Dod in order to conceive a saint or angel, and in the end was rewarded with "but an ordinary birth". There is Jonson's account of his own premonitory vision of his dead son with the mark of a bloody cross on his forehead, and of his night spent "looking to his great toe, about which he hath seen Tartars and Turks, Romans and Carthaginians, fight in his imagination". Such tales seem almost to have emerged from that world of Elizabethan romance that Jonson ostensibly despised; together, they testify to the presence of a stranger and stronger imaginative life than Jonson is conventionally reckoned to possess, and suggest more complex origins and affiliations for his art.

Anne Barton questions, furthermore, the linear theory of Jonson's development as a dramatist, with its melancholy coda of middle-aged decline. The pattern of Jonson's career that emerges from her book is one of constant shifts and evolutions, triggered by theatrical experiment, discovery and disaster, and by the slower processes of maturity and ageing. Much of his work in this account is the product of a restless, critical and self-critical habit of reaction: reaction against the achievements of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors, and also against his own earlier work. The experiments with comical satire led Jonson understandably to explore a contrary mode, in a conscious attempt to see "if tragedy have a more kind aspect"; *Sejanus* was the result. It is not a play that Anne Barton much admires, but she interestingly suggests that this excursion into tragedy helped Jonson to perfect the grim, sardonic humour that he was then to exploit with such effect in *Volpone*. After the triumph of *The Alchemist*, Jonson moved less explicitly back to tragedy again, with the catastrophic venture of *Catiline*: a testimony at least to his readiness to break from a successful formula to an area of high theatrical risk. *Bartholomew Fair*, an extraordinary achievement in quite another comic mode, represented also the end of one possible phase of Jonson's development: a creative impasse, driving him to new inventions. Jonson's career in this account moves in often unpredictable and fox-like ways, sometimes in long and surprising backward loops to previously scorned or abandoned dramatic modes; but it does not, in any simple, qualitative way, regress.

Jonson's reactions to the work of his great contemporaries, Professor Barton suggests, were equally complex, and affected his own creative development more deeply than he always cared to admit. If Jonson's occasional pronouncements about his fellow writers suggest a dogmatic inflexibility, the sum of those pronouncements often indicates a more wavering and ambivalent attitude. The case of Spenser is characteristic. In the *Discoveries* Jonson declared that "Spenser, in affecting the ancients, writ no language, yet I would have him read for his matter". In conversation with Drummond he expressed dislike both of Spenser's stanzas and of his matter; yet he also recited to Drummond parts of *The Shepherd's Calendar* that he had by heart. In a late poem he refers, as Professor Barton notices, to "Spenser's noble book" – but the poem (it should be added) was written in honour of Sir Kenelm Digby, who was devoted to Spenser and had written *Observations on The Faerie Queene*: the small flourish on Jonson's part therefore has its reasons. Anne Barton believes that Jonson himself had taken the trouble to work out an explication of *The Faerie Queene*, which he sent to Raleigh. If Jonson really did attempt to unravel the allegory of *The Faerie Queene* this fact would be of importance, for it might seem to contradict the traditional notion of Jonson's moral and aesthetic tastes; of his passion for order, his sense of probability, decorum. Yet the contradictions, with Drummond also reveal much of Jonson's character, the consuming interest in the bizarre, the grotesque, the impossible, the fantastic. The anecdotes which he related to Hawthornden frequently turn on coincidence, or explore abnormal mental states. There is his story, for example, of the quidding issues it raises.

closely acquainted with Spenser's writings. Echoes are to be found throughout his poetry, and allusions surface surprisingly in his comedies. Here is how Face introduces Dapper to Subtle early in *The Alchemist*:

"Slight, I bring you
No cheating Clim-o-the-Cloughs, or Claribells,
That look as big as five-and-fifty, and flush,
And spit out secrets like hot custard . . ."

"Lewd Claribell" is one of the knights encountered in the fourth book of *The Faerie Queene*: Dapper is to meet his own preposterous Queen of the Faery, alias Dol, a little later in *The Alchemist*. Barton misses this skittish allusion, but catches others of greater interest in *The Sad Shepherd*, where she suggests that Jonson appropriates and reworks the story of Florimell, from the same area of *The Faerie Queene*.

Jonson's attitude to the other major writers of his time is equally varying. The Donne who "deserved hanging" was also an admired friend whose poetic style at times so closely resembled Jonson's as to present their modern editors with serious problems of attribution. Of Sidney's *Arcadia* and *Astrophil and Stella* Jonson seems to have had no very high opinion, yet the influence of Sidney's *Apology* on Jonson's critical thinking (though it is not mapped in the present book) is certainly profound. Jonson's attitude to Shakespeare – guarded, affectionate, generous, sharp – presents notorious problems of interpretation. In his great poem to Shakespeare's memory prefixed to the 1623 Folio, in his remarks to Drummond and in his more extended comments in *Discoveries*, Jonson pays handsome tribute to Shakespeare's powerful genius, yet at the same time warily measures his critical and creative distance. Jonson may have assisted Heminges and Condell in the preparation of the First Folio, and Barton speculates that around this time he may have taken the opportunity to read extensively through Shakespeare's canon. In *The New Inn*, performed in 1626, she finds a surprising readiness on Jonson's part "to re-think the premises of Shakespearean comedy, to explore its attitudes, and, up to a point, make them his own".

It is to these strange, often disregarded, "Shakespearean" plays of Jonson's final period that Anne Barton herself is evidently most strongly attracted, and for which her book makes its most eloquent appeal. She does not set out to be totally revisionist, and – putting *Sejanus* quietly to one side – acknowledges that Jonson's supreme achievements are the Jacobean comedies, *Volpone*, *Epicoene*, *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*. Her accounts of these middle-period plays are never less than intelligent, though at times one may feel them to be a touch perfunctory; throughout the book it is the less familiar plays – of the early, and, more especially, the late, periods – that provoke her most extended and original responses. In *The Devil is an Ass*, "an immensely courageous play, far better and more interesting than most of its critics have made out", she finds Jonson simultaneously returning to old dramatic forms and entering upon new emotional and poetic territory. In his first Caroline comedy, *The Staple of News*, she argues that Jonson transforms attitudes and devices that he had mocked in *Eastward Ho! The New Inn* is a "fine and haunting play" in which the Shakespearean influence (along with that of Lyly and Spenser, Sidney and the early Donne, Chaucer, Plato and Castiglione) is "brilliantly accommodated to Jonson's own interests and temperament". *The Magnificent Lady* she finds at once a less Shakespearean and less successful play than *The New Inn*, but she is struck by the play's intermittent sense of retrospect, as Jonson appears to contemplate the imminence of his own death, and review the development of his work as a whole.

In the most absorbing chapter of her book, "Harking back to Elizabeth: Jonson and Caroline nostalgia", Anne Barton connects this retrospective impulse in the late Ben Jonson with a wider tendency in the 1620s and 1630s to look back with affection and regret at the vanished, faded age of Queen Elizabeth. This habit of nostalgia was already evident during the reign of King James, who recognized its political dangers: The Society of Antiquaries was mysteriously dissolved in 1607; Robert Cotton, one of its leading spirits, had been inclined to view the England of Elizabeth as a near-perfect state, from which affairs had since declined.

Fulke Greville's projected account of the age of Elizabeth was thwarted by Cecil a few years later on the grounds that it "may perchance be construed to the prejudice of this". During Charles's reign this nostalgia acquires a keener edge. Professor Barton finds an intriguing instance of its operation in a play by Jonson's patron and disciple William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle, *The Variety* (acted 1641), in which a character bearing the Jonsonian name of Manly sturdily defies mockery while maintaining the dress and manners of the Elizabethan age. In real life, she reminds us, the Earl of Arundel, saluted by Jonson in *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, similarly maintained Elizabethan garb and custom, quietly expressing his distaste for the politics of the present age.

This skilful analysis of Caroline nostalgia interestingly intersects with Keith Thomas's recent and more wide-ranging survey (in the Creighton Trust Lecture for 1983) of perceptions of the past in early modern England. But Jonson's own nostalgia, it must be said, was scarcely grounded in political radicalism. Throughout his final years, as England moved steadily in the direction of civil war, Jonson clung tenaciously to his royalist hopes and beliefs, penning from his sick-bed loyal verses to King Charles lamenting the growing unrest throughout the land, and the sullen and significant silence of Tower guns and steeple bells on Henrietta Maria's birthday. During this last phase of his life, as he lay immobilized in Westminster, Jonson expressed a growing fondness (as J. B. Bamforth has recently noted) for rural, folkloric and archaic subjects, and for a return to the lost and golden world of English pastoral life.

I should think it still might be
As 'twas, a happy age, when on the plains
The woodmen met the damsels, and the swains,
The neatherds, ploughmen, and the pipers loud,
And each did dance, some to the kit or crowd,
Some to the bagpipe, some the tabret moved,
And all did either love, or were beloved.

These are the words of Robin Hood in Jonson's unfinished play *The Sad Shepherd*. Jonson's Oxford editors, favouring the view that Jonson's powers deteriorated with age, concede with some reluctance that this fresh pastoral piece must indeed have been written in Jonson's final years. The engaging rural comedy *A Tale of a Tub*, on the other hand, they assign to the beginning of his career, believing it to be his earliest surviving play, later retouched. Anne Barton argues firmly and persuasively that *The Sad Shepherd*, *A Tale of a Tub* and the fragment *Mortimer His Fall* (declared by Herford and Simpson to be "clearly early work") all in fact belong to Jonson's final years. This is a significant reorientation of the canon. Equally important is her finely (and to my mind convincingly) argued case for ascribing to Jonson the much-debated "additions" to *The Spanish Tragedy*: an ascription which, if accepted, modifies in yet another way our view of Jonson's relationship with the literature of the Elizabethan age.

What are we finally to make of Professor Barton's extensive redrawing of the conventional graph of Jonson's development as a writer? I am persuaded by most of her scholarly arguments, and share her general belief that Jonson in his later years was capable of producing powerful and surprising work: the non-dramatic verse alone provides evidence enough to support this view. I suspect I shall not be the only reader, however, who will find it difficult to share her enthusiasm, judiciously qualified though it be, for a play such as *The New Inn*, which appears "Shakespearean" only in a sadly diminished sense of that word: "The last plays of Jonson are by no means 'dotages'", wrote Northrop Frye in *A Natural Perspective*, "but they seem almost mechanical models of plays rather than actual plays. They have every dramatic virtue except the drive and energy that keep *The Alchemist* in the world's repertoire." And that, perhaps is unhappily near the truth. Anne Barton's generous and challenging study is nevertheless one of the most important reassessments of Jonson's work to appear in recent years. It transforms Jonson the dramatist from the tortoise to the fox, and invites us to think again about the complex route he travelled: and for this above all we have cause to be grateful.

John W. D. Jones

Touring the provinces

Irving Wardle

GEORGE ROWELL and ANTHONY JACKSON
The Repertory Movement: A history of regional theatre in Britain
230pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50 (paperback, £7.95).
0521 237394

After so many celebratory jamborees and books on individual theatres, it comes as a shock to learn that this is the first full survey of the British repertory movement. But it is less of a surprise when you ask who would want to tackle a subject so shapeless and unwieldy that its very name resists definition. One glance at the virgin forest of research material must have persuaded many an enthusiast that here were the ingredients of an important book for somebody else to write. Even now, it has taken two authors to shoulder the task which they have manifestly carried out in a dogged spirit of public duty.

George Rowell is a Victorian scholar, and Anthony Jackson a university lecturer specializing in theatre-in-education. One tells most of the story up to the mid-century, the other events of the past thirty years; but such is their approach that there is no sense of divided authorship. They offer an objective record, venturing no criticism or strong opinions, glossing over whatever old battles they cannot ignore; and reducing the whole thing to 200 pages in the hope that its essential pattern – if any – will thereby emerge.

Their one indulgence is to lead off with a chapter on the nineteenth century. This at least forestalls any idea that provincial repertory

arose out of thin air with the Manchester Gaity; and opens up the narrative to historical parallels – such as the ironic resemblance between fly-by-night appearances of London stars in the old stock companies and the habit of TV celebrities to go slumming among today's reps.

A basic irony that gets less attention is the fact that although the repertory movement originated as a revolt against metropolitan domination, its first real impetus came straight from London with the collapse of Barker's Savoy season and the dispersal of its repertoire and actors to the new stages of Manchester and Liverpool. Even local policy took its cue from Barker's plea for a "Normal Theatre" producing "normal plays for normal people".

A crucial factor to which Rowell gives due weight is the contrast between these two theatres as prototypes of two separate traditions. Manchester (following the Dublin Abbey) was the creation of the wealthy Annie Horniman; Liverpool was brought into existence by local backers and then run by a board representing 900 shareholders. Once set, the double pattern persisted through the independent operations of Barry Jackson in Birmingham and Terence Gray in Cambridge; and the board-controlled stages of Bristol and Sheffield. The even-handed treatment of these two lines of development disposes of the myth that the British repertory system owes its existence to Horniman's Tea and Jackson's Maypole Dairies. From the start, it was a civilly organized movement as well; and it was this side of the operation that subsequently spread out into the field of community drama, theatre-in-education, and supplied the structure which now supports the National Theatre

and the RSC.

The underlining point also emerges that repertory before 1914 flourished in industrial cities rather than in centres of learning. Manchester's strong German community supplied a ready-made audience for repertoire programmes; and serious theatre took root in the midst of this and other busy, grimy environments, while at Oxford and Cambridge – even when it did arrive in the 1920s – it was hived off to Terence Gray's disused house in Barnwell and J. B. Fagan's big-game museum on the Woodstock Road.

The authors adopt the terms "avant-garde" and "self-help" to identify the parallel traditions; a division that becomes meaningless with the arrival of the Arts Council and the proliferation of fringe outfits, Little Theatres, community companies, three-weekly programming, and "national theatres for the region".

Men of many parts

Craig Brown

MELVYN BRAGG
Laurence Olivier
144pp. Hutchinson. £12.50.
009 1587409
GYLES BRANDRETH
John Gielgud: A celebration
186pp. Pavilion. £12.95.
0907516386
JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR
Alec Guinness: A celebration
184pp. Pavilion. £12.95.
0907516416
SIMON CALLOW
Béning an Actor
190pp. Methuen. £7.95.
0413 52440X

unfair to dismiss that excellent actor, Wyndham Goldie, as being "achingly dull", it is a mistake to introduce such an adjective in a book some of which is pretty heavy-going – too many plots of too many forgotten plays, and too many to those pronouncements intended to sound profound and meaningful ("Chanel was a great woman; the spiritual mother of George Devine"), but which aren't.

Handsome full-page photographs dot the text (there is Wolf looking alarmingly ruinous as Touchstone, Marie Tempest in a chic hat, Martin-Harvey in *The Only Way*, and many more); but here again there are oddities. Do we really need, in this type of book, Hitler addressing the multitudes, a hideous road in Sheffield, Cardinal Newman in profile, the Queen Mother (God bless her indeed but here described as "the most significant woman of our age") and Anthony Blunt yet again, of whom enough is now more than.

There is, however, no doubt about Hobson being a great theatre-lover in the widest sense and, apart from those omissions, he revives the happiest memories – Richardson in *Johnson over Jordan*, Jack Buchanan (six references), Peggy Ashcroft in *The Heiress*, Quayle's Stratford seasons, Stanley Lupino, Judy Campbell singing about that bird that also sang in a London square, John Gielgud's magical season in 1937 at the Queen's, Jack Hulbert, Rattigan comedies, Evelyn Laye (Hobson plainly prefers actresses to be beautiful) in *Helen*, the Aldwych farces, and much else. Nor are Edwige Fenech and Madeleine Renaud overlooked, though they hardly rank as British theatre.

And eventually, lo and behold, the odd man out becomes the odd man in. All the causes – Beckett, Osborne, Pinter – for which I have fought have been won and there have been several brilliant achievements. Nevertheless, on the whole the result has been desolation. The battles will have to be fought all over again, and the other way round; until it once more becomes possible to stage for a young man to fall in love with a girl, or speak of his country without contempt.

One only wishes that Sir Harold could carry on and fight such battles himself.

I was privileged to be at the side of Noël Coward as the curtain fell on *West Side Story* and to hear him call to our author, "Dear Harold, don't get it wrong this time!" How very pleased Sir Noël would be to know that, at the present time, Sir Harold is getting it entirely right.

It is hard to treat photographs of actors playing roles with the awe the original performance might have evoked. Designed to show how different the actor can look, they highlight the similarities. Through King Lear's beard, we can't help but make out the form of Algeon. Behind the props and the costumes and the make-up – all of them in clearer evidence than ever – is the face of the actor, denuded of the sound and the movement and the changing emotions that once turned him into his character.

Gyles Brandreth's *John Gielgud*, Melvyn Bragg's *Laurence Olivier* and John Russell Taylor's *Alec Guinness* are photographic records of each actor's career with long essays attached. All three books are designed by the same man, Craig Dodd, to look luxurious and reverent. The photographs are plentiful, the typeface large, and selected pages are finished in mock-marbling. If you are not an actor then you must be at least a member of the Royal Family to merit this sort of treatment from a publisher.

Bragg's book is the most ambitious of the three in its attempt to penetrate the psychology of its subject. In this admirable aim, Bragg is aided by the intensity of the drama in Olivier's personal life – his fear of his father, a High Church clergyman, the early death of his beloved mother, his marriage to Vivien Leigh – but hindered by Olivier's extraordinary guardedness. Bragg's thesis is that, "In all his many costumes; behind all the false noses and the wads of make-up, under the wigs and beards and padding and armour, he is telling us the truth about himself. He is always himself, always naked." Bragg is keen on repeating the paradox that is often trotted out: to explain actors: "He had changed himself and found himself; or again, 'If only by being a thousand others could Olivier be fully himself', but the more this sort of thing is repeated, the more meaningless it becomes. Why not, 'Only by being a thousand others could Olivier be a thousand others'? We are still left with the feeling that there ought to be no centre to Olivier, that, stripped of his clothes, he might not exist."

Brandreth's book on Gielgud, subtitled "A celebration", is described by its author as a "pictorial tribute" and doesn't bother to get very far under the skin of its subject. Though Brandreth resurrects many bad notices Giel-

Jackson takes account of this, in a chapter covering the years 1958-63, by focusing in detail on six companies. It is a well-researched chapter, and particularly illuminating on Peter Cheeseman's Stoke-on-Trent company and the Liverpool Everyman.

It also stands in damaging contrast with the rest of the book, from which close focus is signally absent. Narrative compression may heighten key events, but it also reduces the story to the colourless impersonality of an encyclopedia entry. Inescapably this falsifies a movement largely created by passionate individuals of wildly diverse temperament and motive, no matter what their shared debt to the theatrical prophecies of Matthew Arnold, as a reference work, *The Repertory Movement* will be extremely useful (not least for its chronological and budgetary appendices). Reading it is like digging a garden of solid clay.

gud has gained, his own text is touchingly schoolboyish in its devotion, and he encourages Gielgud to get away with a lot: "It was a time when the war clouds were gathering menacingly over Europe, but for John the affairs of nations always came a poor second to the world of the theatre..." and so on. But in some ways Brandreth's nimble, anecdotal approach is more revealing of its subject than Bragg's speculative ploddings. From Brandreth, we learn that when Gielgud was trying to feel the necessary jealousy for his portrayal of Othello he remembered that "When Larry had a success as Hamlet, I wept", but to get anything as straightforward from Bragg (or, to be fair, Olivier) is out of the question.

John Russell Taylor's *Alec Guinness*, also subtitled "A celebration", falls somewhere between the eulogistic and the psychological. "One sometimes wonders if the real Alec Guinness knows who the real Alec Guinness is. Perhaps his great strength is that he just does not care." Of the three actors under discussion, Guinness is the only one who seems at the same time elusive and worth chasing, and this is true of both his personal and his professional life. For once, the photographs have an accumulative value: ghost-like, Guinness melts into assumed characters so that, in a group of actors on stage it is tricky initially to tell which is him. Russell Taylor is a little heavy-handed in his descriptions of plays and films – he somehow manages to make even *Kind Hearts* and *Coronets* sound boring – but he nicely conveys Guinness's compelling blankness, tying it in with "an uncomfortable void in the centre of his life" of which he "has often spoken". It comes as no surprise that this void has been filled first by Buddhism, and now, by Catholicism, and that he is subject to striking intuitions. On first meeting James Dean "some strange things came over me" and he warned Dean that he would die within a week if he got into his car. A week later, Dean died in that car.

Guinness explains his original desire to become an actor by saying, "I just wanted to be someone else, to be in makeup, in disguise" and Simon Callow in his fascinating book, *Being an Actor*, forcefully demonstrates that, far from being the simple egoist, the actor has a need to fill the void in his own personality by becoming someone else, or "being in another way", to such an extent that "Life can sometimes seem a sad second". It is a brave and dangerous book, part autobiographical, part general, part polemical. Callow, a successful young actor himself, traces his own career through the Drama Centre and the Joint Stock Company to the National Theatre, arguing that only when an actor has the personal courage to "give in" to a role will his portrayal be worthwhile. With vivid descriptions of auditions, rehearsals, performances and the inevitable unemployment, Callow has written an invaluable introduction for any aspiring actor. At the same time, his considered objections to two of the most prominent presumptions in contemporary theatre – that the director should be the master of the production, and that modern "relevance" is all – should embarrass directors (some of them named specifically) into a re-examination of their craft.

Rock bottom realities

Tony Russell

WILFRID MELLERS
A Darker Shade of Pale: A backdrop to Bob Dylan
259pp. Faber. £6.95.
071 133452

I do not quarrel with the view that... Beethoven represents... humanity's supreme and most intensely heroic achievement. But there can never be many Beethovens; and every so often it is salutary to recall a world in which common men were capable of their own smaller heroism, creating music, poetry and dance to which questions of value and of moral choice are not pertinent...

This is a quaint sort of observation to meet in a work on popular music. You might take it to be the voice of one of the early gentleman folklorists like Cecil Sharp, particularly when it goes on to invoke the "real" (or "true") "folk artist", who deals in "rock-bottom reality". But this is Wilfrid Mellers writing in 1984, and such passages are as revealing about his subject as anything that follows is about his subject. Rather less than half of *A Darker Shade of Pale* is concerned with the promise of its subtitle, designing the set on to which Dylan will eventually appear: what the introduction calls "the legacy of white American folk, country and pop music from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century". Since the point of the main title is Dylan's mingling of other strains – the blackness of the blues, the redness of American music – with his white heritage, his declaration of purpose falls oddly short of what is required. Mellers eventually weaves the blues into the pattern, but the reds stay resolutely under the bed.

The author's view of the blues has already been stated in his *Music in a New Found Land* (1964), and he does not add substantially to it. At times, indeed, as in the description of the blues-singer Robert Johnson as "addicted to wine and women no less than to song", he belittles reiterates it, though twenty years' further reflection enables him to conclude that Johnson was also "neurotic", a point evidently important enough to be repeated twice more. But it was a striking feature of *Music in a New Found Land* that it utterly ignored white traditional and country music.

The account of them provided in *A Darker Shade of Pale* is highly selective, but as an impression of white rural music, and of some of its key figures whose work Dylan probably knew, it is generally sound; if Mellers's examples are sometimes arbitrary, they are seldom inaccurate. His opinion of the Cajun music of the Louisiana French, however ("[it] seems to be oblivious of pain and danger"), is ill-founded: the desperate tension of erotic loss and Catholic restraint in the work of performers like the singer and fiddler Dennis McGee produces a wild melancholy rarely matched in

American traditional music. But in this instance it is clear from the discography that Mellers has simply not heard enough of the idiom to evaluate it justly.

Blues and country music were Dylan's set and scenery, but they were seldom, and only in the early days, his script. What we know of his earliest repertoire, the songs he inherited from tradition of other folk interpreters, comes mostly from pirated recordings of domestic sessions. Mellers has no truck with them; Dylan, for him, begins with the official debut album of 1962. "What matters," he says, "is what Dylan does, not what he absorbs." And what follows is a lengthy consideration of Dylan's legitimate recordings, in part analysing the lyrics or plot, in part, and more illuminatingly, describing the music. This is a hard terrain to traverse, but most of the sights Mellers singles out are praised in exact and unextravagant terms. He is kinder than most critics have been to *Self-Portrait*, and one of the few to appreciate the 1973 Dylan album, and he departs most surprisingly from received opinion in awarding *The Basement Tapes* a mere half-paragraph of mild approval.

Through all this the folk-musical, folk-cultural backdrop is intermittently glimpsed, but the lights are turned up for the concluding chapter, "Dylan as Jewish American and White Negro". As to the first part of the title, Mellers has to admit that "there is no direct influence of American music on his work", but he summons the aid of folklorist Alan Lomax's theory of cantometrics to discern shared characteristics like "tumbling strains, in high, strained, rasping timbre, often of meaningless vocabularies". (The technical similarity needs to be more particular than that; as it stands, it could apply to several black blues singers.) On the evidence available, this argument can probably go nowhere; as a metaphor, if another Dylan metaphor is needed, it may do well enough.

On "Dylan as White Negro" a considerable case has been built up over the years, and the arguments do not need, and here do not get, much rehearsing. Mellers has stated earlier: In attaining maturity, American pop music needed to synthesize white euphoria with black reality... Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams more or less enthusiastically strove towards [such a synthesis], while Elvis Presley stages it as a quasi-theatrical performance.

This is fair, but it is also dangerous, for it may remind the reader of an uncomfortable truth: Dylan, unlike Rodgers or Williams or Presley, has never won much admiration from the black audience. This in itself should have sounded a warning against overstatement, but Mellers continues: "When history comes to be written it may seem that [these singers'] significance is as precursors of Bob Dylan." Only Dylan's own generation is likely to accept such a judgement in the spirit in which it was written: protective, fervent and mistaken.

Up from Muswell Hill

Max Bell

JON SAVAGE
The Kinks: The official biography
170pp. Faber. £10.95.
0571 33572

Considering their longevity as recording artists and popular live performers it is surprising that the Kinks have never been written about before. Jon Savage attempts to place them in context and also to illuminate the songwriting skill of Ray Davies. Lennon and McCartney paid close attention to the Kinks' development as lyricists and musicians, and Savage is right to compare Davies's insights into working-class suburban 1960s Britain with such songs as "Penny Lane" and "Eleanor Rigby". Ray Davies provided the satirical nuances, but his brother Dave was equally important, in developing a guitar style which drew from a wide range of English and American influences.

The Davies brothers were born in Muswell Hill, North London, a place which Ray frequently drew upon to give his colloquialisms an authentic ring. Savage's biography, emphasizing the wit of Ray Davies's songs and the book's best when it examines his classic pieces of the 1960s, charting his progress from the "naïveté" of his early work to the "well-thought-out" working-class satire of "Well

Respected Man" and "Dedicated Follower of Fashion" to the more melancholy, but no less incisive, creator of "Waterloo Sunset", "Autumn Almanac" and "Dead End Street".

On the personal level, Savage skirts round matters which would be of interest to the aficionado, perhaps because he has been unable to investigate fully certain sections of the Kinks' complicated history. Davies has allegedly disowned the book, insisting that its "official" tag be dropped and various factual amendments made to any reprint.

The book is too short – it reads like a lengthy magazine article. The later sections are less interesting as they deal with the Kinks' success in America, where they have been praised but never properly understood and where they have also dissipated much of the enduring "Englishness" which set them apart from their contemporaries. Some close textual analysis of Davies's activities as a librettist (*Arthur* predated the Who's over-exposed "rock opera" *Tommy*) and playwright would have been welcome, but if this biography rekindles an interest in Davies as an original observer of contemporary British manners and morals – an achievement only rivalled in pop by Lennon and McCartney – then it will have served its purpose. The Kinks deserve some serious re-evaluation after twenty years.

With the utmost feeling

Richard Williams

GERRI HIRSHLEY
Nowhere to Run: The story of soul music
384pp. Macmillan. £10.95.
0333 38265X

"Soul music" emerged during the decade in which Black America finally got a glimpse of the American dream. During the genre's best years, between 1963 and 1967 – between, say, Mary Wells's "Two Lovers" and Aretha Franklin's "Respect" – recordings released from the studios of Memphis, Detroit and Chicago summarized the virtues of the different sorts of music which had evolved among Africans transplanted to the United States. In the hits of Marvin Gaye and James Brown can be heard the realism and directness of the blues, the spiritual catharsis of gospel singing, and the extended instrumental techniques and distorted time-frames of jazz, fired by a beat synthesized from all three parent idioms.

At its best, soul music approached a state of grace in which the sacred and the secular were united. For the Afro-American, this was no small matter: when Sam Cooke made his decisive move from singing "Jesus Gave Me Water" with the Soul Stirrers to "Twisting the Night Away" on *American Bandstand*, or when Ray Charles put the melismatic cries of gospel into a rhythm and blues context with "I Got a Woman" and "What'd I Say", Black America shuddered – half in pleasure, half in horror.

Little Richard, Solomon Burke and Al Green are only three of many who have moved back and forth between the ministry and the stage, using the same voice and sometimes the same tune for the two different purposes. Marvin Gaye tried to encompass both personae at the same time, wearing the same suit and the same song: his "Let's Get It On" is merely a superb evocation of carnality until, near the fade-out, Gaye whispers "I've been sanctified". Gaye was shot and killed earlier this year by his father, a former minister: the son had just enjoyed the biggest hit of his career with a song, called "Sexual Healing", in which it finally became clear that in Gaye's mind religion and sexuality were one.

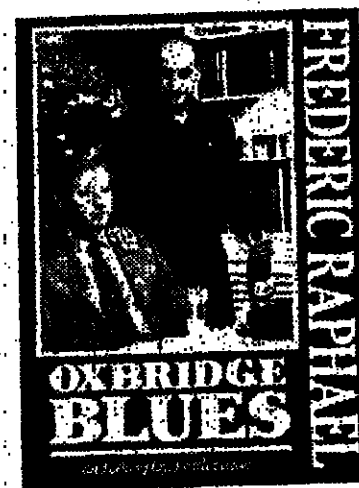
Gerri Hirschley's survey is evocative and explanatory. Michael Jackson talks to her about his admiration for James Brown: "He gets so out of himself", the young star says, referring to the rhythm-induced ecstatic trance which

Brown revived and which is now the basic effect of the crassest disco "product" as well as of Jackson's own superior efforts. Aretha Franklin, another preacher's daughter, speaks eloquently of the distance between the performer and even the most ardent fan: "if they [her listeners] found pain in my music, it has to be their personal interpretation. What I feel singing it, and where it comes from, is something I keep to myself. Music, especially the kind I make, is a very emotional thing. And as an artist you're happy when people get involved. But what they hear and what I feel when I sing it can be very, very different things. Sometimes I wish I could make them understand that."

By no means encyclopedic (there is a large hole where Ray Charles should have been) and resolutely orthodox in its critical stance, *Nowhere to Run* serves primarily as an oral history, valuable so in a field which has generally lacked the intelligent documentation accorded to jazz and blues. More of a fan turned journalist than a scholar, the author is a good listener to such marginal figures as Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Irma Thomas and Percy Sledge: she understands the pressure put on singers turned into stars by a couple of hit records almost wholly created by others. The enduring affection with which soul music is remembered (and constantly revived) by those who were influenced by it in the 1960s does not always work to the benefit of its heroes and heroines, who may meanwhile have returned to the cab-stand, the fire department or the welfare queue.

The texture of conversation and the quality of lives, from Michael Jackson in his Encino mansion to Florence Ballard, once a Supreme, dying in squalor, are sometimes beautifully caught. Here is Mary Wells on a fatherless childhood: "It was just me and her. I started helping my mother with the work when I was around twelve. When you get that old, a kid can see something goin' out of her mama's face. Like a dress you can wash but so many times and it ain't gonna size up so smart on the hanger. Now church helped. She always stood better when she came out of there on Sunday." Chronicling this rich and prolific vein of post-war popular music, *Nowhere to Run* is an evocative account of a culture in transition.

Sue Steward and Sheryl Carratt's *Signed Sealed Delivered* (168pp. Pluto Press. £5.95. 0 86104 657 9) contains accounts of the lives of women rock stars interspersed with interviews with musicians and singers.



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FROM BOOKSELLERS

BBC
PUBLICATIONS

The religious divide

Owen Chadwick

PETER STADLER
Der Kulturkampf in der Schweiz: Staat und Kirche im 19. Jahrhundert
787pp. Frauenfeld: Huber. Sw fr 130.
3 7193 0928 2

Der Kulturkampf in der Schweiz is a scholarly study of a formative episode in Swiss history, one which has been described by partisans and appears in all the textbooks. This is the first full analysis. Peter Stadler commands the archives, and the narrative at first disarms by its detail. But as it unfolds, it begins to grip the reader with a grim fascination: for this is a subject not only of great historical interest, but of relevance to anyone concerned with sectarian strife in the modern world.

Wherever industry came, society suffered the tension between the liberalism and "modernity" of city bourgeois and the steady conservatism of the countryside. Sometimes this tension was focused in a racial difference, as with the Polish inhabitants within eastern Germany; or as in the Bernese Jura, where the government of the canton Bern spoke German and the people of the Jura spoke French. More often it was found in a religious difference: as where Catholic Poles were a subject minority within Protestant Prussia; or as where the new industries of Basel or Bern or Zürich or Geneva were led by Protestants and out in the countryside lived many Catholic peasants. A Kulturkampf always had an element, sometimes small but nevertheless present, of town versus country; a large element of old-fashioned religious strife, the inheritance of Reformation and Counter-Reformation (a strife which the Enlightenment seemed to assuage during the eighteenth century; but which the mixture of populations by political change, and the new ease of transport, recreated); and often an element of racial difference to embitter the conflict and fortify the minority.

To posterity the Protestant majorities in Germany and Switzerland look very secure, but in the middle of the nineteenth century they did not feel so. Each state was new as a unity. The German Empire was created in 1871 with a Protestant Hohenzollern at its head. Bismarck suspected the large Catholic minority within the state, mainly Rhinelanders and Bavarians and Poles, of pulling away towards the old weak, federated Germany. The Swiss had only turned themselves into a unified state, as distinct from a loose collection of cantons, after 1848. They had to fight the Catholic cantons. In a clean little civil war of a few weeks, to prevent them seceding from federal authority. They suspected the Catholics of not being quite Swiss. And it was true that Catholic liberties rested on the independent powers of the cantons against the federal government. Bismarck believed that to keep Germany a unity he must smash the power of the Catholics in German politics. Bern and Geneva and Basel believed that to keep Switzerland a unity they must smash Catholic power in Swiss politics.

The nature of the problem made Protestants the aggressors. It was the calamity of the Catholic Church, that Pope Pius IX made Catholics look like the aggressors. The Syllabus of Errors in 1864 condemned liberalism as well as socialism; the Vatican Council of 1870 proclaimed the Pope infallible. All over Europe men feared that these ringing proclamations condemned the modern liberal state. They regarded the Pope and his men as obscuring assailants of their freedoms. A Swiss bishop, the learned Greith of St Gall, voted against the definition of infallibility as "inopportune". And by inopportune he meant

precisely this: whether or not the doctrine was true, to proclaim it would give the Swiss Protestants a cause and a mood for attack.

The Swiss Kulturkampf was only bad in cantons where the people were mixed in religion (in the old forest cantons of William Tell there was no trouble) or where the bishop was aggressive or clumsy. In St Gall, where Bishop Greith was wise, but where the population was mixed, especially in Protestant town and Catholic countryside, trouble happened, but not for long. Not all Catholics liked what Rome did. In St Gall a Protestant government was kept in power with the aid of moderate Catholics.

For the most troubled areas were the two western dioceses - Basel and Lausanne-Geneva. The reasons for this are three. First, the diocese of Basel was very large and contained several cantons; inside its borders lay the developing industries, or most of them, of the new Switzerland. The diocese contained the strength of Swiss Protestantism



Elderly members of the Brotherhood of San Rocco in Stabio: one of the 150 photographs by Gino Pedrotti, with captions and an introductory study of the Swiss photographer by Plinio Grossi, in Tessen (179pp. Zürich: Rentsch. Sw fr 58. 3 7429 0573 4).

and the key to Swiss prosperity. The unfortunate Bishop Lachat of Basel, at a moment of aggressive Catholicism, was up against a Protestantism dominant politically and socially, and made very self-conscious by recent events.

Second, in both the most troubled areas the Catholic minority was French-speaking. In the Jura they were up not only against a dominant Protestantism but a dominant Germanity, in Geneva against French-speakers. But in each case they had a support which the German-speaking Catholics hardly possessed. Across the border they could find money, propaganda and even political pressure from Catholic France. And these were years when French ultramontane Catholicism was ultra-papalistic, reactionary and militant. The French government only failed to interfere more actively in the defence of the Swiss Catholics because they were afraid of Bismarck, but the existence of Catholic France helped to embitter the conflict. It also ensured that in the long run the Protestant canton governments could not win.

And the third reason is simply personalities. Since the fall of Rome to the Italians in September 1870, Pius IX had become a holy exile, for whom any hint of rational politics was treachery. His secularized Secretary of State, Cardinal Antonelli, had mismanaged things for twenty years and continued to behave as before. And in Geneva they had Mermillod, Bishop of Hebron because they did not like to make him Bishop of Geneva lest the act be too provocative. It is not certain that the portrait of Mermillod in Stadler's book is quite fair. He appears as a bishop of the drawing-room and the salon, in Geneva but not of Geneva, always in mentally an outsider and regarded by Geneva as an outsider. There are moments in Mermillod's life when it is possible to admire him, but whatever his quality or his spirituality, he was just the man whom at that moment Pius IX would like to have in Geneva. Although Geneva had become liberal, deistic, rationalizing and a seat of international socialism, it never forgot that it was the city of Calvin

and the sanctuary of an advance in the human spirit. By this date Catholics were about half the canton, though not half the city, of Geneva. But the memories of Geneva were so alive that an aggressive Catholicism felt to some of the Genevans like trying to erect an altar of Baal within the temple of Jehovah.

And in Geneva the anger was embittered by the leader of the canton government, Carteret. In reading this book one slowly starts to prefer the federal government to the canton governments. At the federal level you catch, from time to time though not quite often enough, the voices of statesmen. At the canton level the wise are hard to find among the rigid little men practising near-municipal and very provincial politics in what at times feels like a teacup.

Carteret was a type rarer in Switzerland than in France: a man who identified "liberalism" with anticlericalism. He cared a lot about, and did a lot for, schools and the Academy. But he saw clerics as the enemy of this improved education. For him the word Kulturkampf was

pray with Bishop Lachat and to have their children confirmed under his hand. He stayed in Lucerne for eleven years until the next Pope made him Archbishop of Damietta and administrator of the Catholic parishes in the canton Ticino. Thus Leo XIII relieved himself of both the episcopal problems inherited from his predecessor, by bestowing promotion.

Meanwhile in the Jura, it was becoming like a Vendée without the blood. Almost all the priests backed Lachat, and the government expelled the lot. It then tried to hire priests from all over Europe. Some of the new men were hirelings, a few were immoral, a few were excellent priests who after a time found the situation intolerable and resigned. The priests of the Jura were quite different from Mermillod, or Lachat: they had a hold on the people. The people used processions and banners as political demonstrations, so the government banned processions outside church. The windows of the vicarages occupied by the new men were broken and as they walked to church they might run the gauntlet of spitting from the women of the parish. The Catholics of the Jura remind one of the Covenanters of Scotland in their time of persecution - the worship in barns, the difficulties of open-air services during the winter cold, the enthusiasm, the sense of being in a new catacomb. Imported clergy received anonymous threats of assassination; the canton sent soldiers into the recalcitrant parishes; recalcitrant families had troops billeted in their houses. "The boycott of the new Church", said a member of the Bernese government, "is an act of rebellion, for from birth to death the citizen belongs to the State and the Church has no other right over them than that which the State concedes." And just across the border in France the exiled priests ministered: whole congregations crossed the border to services, priests came over secretly by night. Some of the church furniture was smuggled across and the State insisted on inventories. It was all very expensive, and people started to think again when it began to affect the tourist trade.

By 1878 everyone was tired of the fight. With the aid of Pope Leo, the governments concerned made an easy reconciliation. The attempt to weaken Catholicism by State means had failed. The Catholics could hold out not only in the solid Catholic areas but also in the diaspora.

It was not an outright Catholic victory. Traces of the restrictive legislation stayed for many years, the ban on Jesuits in Switzerland till our own age. The two bishops never came home. The conflict left marks on Switzerland. The Old Catholic Church, free from Rome, was never strong, but despite its troubled origins remained relatively stronger than the Old Catholics in Germany. Most of the country parish churches were got back by the Roman Catholic congregations through the simple expedient of going into the church elections and voting, but Old Catholic influence remained a thing to take account of, because the tradition of a liberal Catholicism was historic in Switzerland. Its influence helped the Protestants to achieve a further revision of the constitution; and in this way the Kulturkampf became a key-point in the constitutional history of modern Switzerland.

The affair poisoned the atmosphere of the country. It delayed the full acceptance by Catholics of a unified state; almost till the First World War. The acceptance of the state had to wait, as in Italy, till Liberals found in the Catholics a necessary ally in the defence against advancing Socialism. But even after acceptance, the Catholics kept something of that tightness which the Kulturkampf fostered. The Christian Democratic People's Party, so powerful in the forest cantons, Valais and Freiburg, is the successor of the old Catholic Conservative Party. As late as 1972 I was told in Bern by the Swiss Federal Minister of Education, "The Bernese Jura is the Ulster of Switzerland."

Something about this episode is encouraging. A people, it seems, can have a political-religious division into Catholic versus Protestant, marked by civil war, second-class citizenship and oppressive legislation; and forty years afterwards almost everyone accepts that they all wish to be equal citizens of a federated state. Since that happened, no one can be without hope for the future of Ireland.

The making of a name

Jean Starobinski

HUNTINGTON WILLIAMS
Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography
230pp. Oxford University Press. £13.50.
0198135387

Huntington Williams's *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography* sounds a new note in the vast literature on Rousseau. He has chosen to examine Rousseau as a writer. This does not mean that he dismisses Rousseau's thought, but he refuses to divide the idea expressed from the means of its expression; and, in addition, he has justifiably opted to view the work of Rousseau not as an ethical and philosophical system, but as a dynamic process tending towards autobiography - an autobiography which has served as a model or point of reference up to the present time. He suggests unexpected, sharp and often brilliant readings, without attempting to impose them on the reader. He is careful to announce his intentions, mark the stages of his argument and recapitulate what has gone before: this is a well-organized book, at the same time bold in interpretation and scrupulous in method. In a field bedevilled by complexity and ambiguity, Williams has the virtue of putting his cards on the table by trying to illuminate as far as possible his own critical method and, at the same time, the textual phenomena to which he wishes to draw our attention. Even when one is unable to accept certain of his hypotheses or details of his textual analysis, one is grateful to him for prompting an objection or providing the opportunity to disagree. He induces us to read Rousseau from a new angle and we must take serious account of his book.

I remember Leo Spitzer, thirty years ago, deploring the fact that there were so many studies of Rousseau's philosophy or his inner life, and so few of his style or his literary art. The situation has barely changed since then. Williams's book is probably the first to approach the work of Rousseau as a textual "world", and to experience the text so directly. Though it takes account of the overall structure of the oeuvre, it derives the bulk of its information from single pages or isolated fragments, by submitting them to minute examination and detailed linguistic analysis. In some ways, it would have met the expectations of Spitzer himself, since it relies on the rhythm of sentences, lexical choices, and summaries of antitheses or repetition. But in reality Williams's method rests on neither linguistics nor rhetoric. By listening closely to the text, he is able to distinguish its themes, assert its theoretical importance and speculate on the series of successive choices which were to lead Rousseau to his autobiographical work. Where stylistics sets out to distinguish the specific psychological indices in a writer's work, Williams is much more concerned with highlighting the successive stages in Rousseau's representation of the self, the necessary links between them and the various ways he uses fiction in them. Stylistic analysis here has no more than a preliminary function; to set in motion a reflective enterprise which subsequently shifts to another plane. In fact, and in a highly personal and authoritative way, Williams adopts the kind of close reading practised by Paul de Man, who thought of criticism as a philosophy of the act of writing. He expects the question he puts to the text to yield not a singular answer but a more far-reaching and general one. Williams's ambition is to construct a theory of Romantic and modern autobiography through Rousseau, and Rousseau alone. His search for typical features, capable of generalization, based on revealing passages, leads inevitably to a reading that is productive of symbolic and allegorical meanings, quite different in aim from the release of the "poetry of grammar" beloved of Spitzer and Jakobson, or the revelation of inner experience exemplified in the work of Georges Poulet. His is a more ambitious undertaking, and the stakes are higher: so too are the risks, since, if he is to go beyond these "preconceptions", he must overcome the obstacle of grammatical analysis, store up the results of his phenomenological perceptions and establish the correspondences and comparisons which will support his argument. The risk lies in placing too much weight on a few alluring

structures on the foundation of terms or pairs of terms in the text which are given greater significance than they actually possess. The result is a disproportion between the fragility of an ingenious reading which is merely probable and at times debatable, and the theoretical developments that this reading produces and underpins.

The guiding theme which Williams sets down in his introduction is surely right: Rousseau's autobiography is a textual exchange with his own pre-autobiographical writings. *Discours sur l'inégalité*, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Emile*, and Rousseau's other theoretical, fictional, and dramatic works are present there, just as Scripture is present in Augustine's *Confessions*. Rousseau constructs an image of himself, literally invents himself in these pre-autobiographical texts. They are sources of certainty and value, important points of reference whereby he interprets his past existence. The autonomous self must write his own scriptures. Hence the conclusion that the fiction manifested in his earliest works is also a sacred act, and that the autobiographical enterprise by which Rousseau was to attempt to encompass his own truth must inevitably confer an almost divine authority on this fiction, dictated by the "heart" of Jean-Jacques. In support of his thesis, Williams might have recalled that the Latin word *factor* is used to designate one who invents or models a figure, and by extension a liar, but that the Christian fathers used the same term for God, in his capacity as creator of the universe. In the case of Rousseau, who confers divine status on himself, there is a reduplication of the fiction and the outcome is clearly described by Williams:

The autobiographical project transforms his life into a text. To him the text becomes real, while the actual world around him becomes progressively unreal and fictional. By the end of the process (the *Réveries*), what is real and what is fictional have become indistinguishable. Rousseau's own conclusion is to hover between god-like self-sufficiency and an abysmal solitude.

Williams's method is circular: he borrows the first example in his book from the last of the autobiographical works, *Les Réveries*, since, in the order which he is constructing, the experience of *réverie* is the primary condition for pre-autobiographical writing. He casts his net wide as he attempts to seize on the fundamental modalities in Rousseau of the perception of time, of relationships with the other, of imagination, of the division or unification of the self and the external world. So he does not confine himself to tracing chronologically the biographical stages by which Rousseau established his work and his identity as a writer. He expects the reader already to have "a fairly specialized working knowledge of the author", though, in the course of his book, he does give a concise account of the "biographical background", with a recommendation to us to supplement this by going back to the primary sources.

It is perfectly acceptable for a critical work to study the problems out of their true chronological order. However, I feel that in this case, Williams would have done better to stay closer to Rousseau's personal history and to take account of the historical circumstances in which his work evolved. Without in any way challenging the notion that "language is part of the fabric of our world", or depriving the act of writing of its decisive role, it would have been possible to take more account of the stance, first of emulation, then of conflict, adopted by Rousseau towards the great names on the literary and musical scene: Voltaire and Rameau. The birth of Rousseau's "textual world" was largely determined by his wish to "make a name for himself" equal to those of Voltaire and Rameau and, if possible, with their support. His unhappy experience with the *Muses galantes* and the *Fêtes de Rameau*, when he found himself in close contact with the masters whom he admired, only to be confronted with indifference (Voltaire) or open hostility (Rameau), left him no alternative but to try to make his name against them and, in a wider context, against the society they represented. The wish to succeed through identification with models socially acceptable in France had been frustrated. What remained, if he was to assert himself, was the expedient of identifying himself with historical representatives of a vanished *veritas* (Fabricius and Cato); and identifying himself with a model provided by the society of his birth, that of the patriotic citizen

of an "austere" republic. After his "conversion" on the road to Vincennes (1749), Rousseau "invented himself" in the role of eloquent accuser: the target of his accusation is not society in the abstract, but the kind of society for which Voltaire (the only contemporary writer mentioned in Rousseau's first work) had made himself the spokesman, notably in the brilliant and frivolous apology for luxury entitled *Le Mondain*. From his first major writing, Rousseau had taken upon himself the mantle of the "dissenter", in radical opposition to this society, and he felt obliged in subsequent books, including his novel, to supply proof of the validity of his opposition. The attacks against Voltaire and Rameau continue, while the values he opposes to theirs become more coherent and attractive. Rousseau made himself a name by simultaneously arousing in his readers an awareness of error, and the desire for another world.

In some of the best passages in his book, Williams analyses the lure of pseudonyms for the young Jean-Jacques, and also Rousseau's diplomatic experiences - that is, the occasions when he was speaking on behalf of someone else: for the false archimandrite in Bern or the King of France in Venice. In Solothurn, once the archimandrite had been unmasked as a common swindler, Rousseau, only eighteen years old, confessed to the French ambassador, admitting his name but lying about his origins, saying that he was from Paris. He was taken to the room occupied a few years earlier by his namesake, the poet J.-B. Rousseau, and heard himself say: "It is up to you to replace him in every respect so that one day people will say 'Rousseau the first, Rousseau the second'". For Jean-Jacques, the result was a brief period of trying to identify with the writer and with the genre he had practised, lyric poetry. At the time, he was prepared to take on the role and the style of his famous namesake. So it would have been interesting at this point had Williams referred to some of Rousseau's early letters: his *Correspondance*, particularly up to 1750, constitutes an earlier state of the "text" than the works Williams describes as "pre-autobiographical" and it is a pity it occupies so small a place in the corpus which he studies.

In a letter to Voltaire dated January 30, 1750 - after the illumination at Vincennes but before the first *Discours* had won its prize - Rousseau, for the first time, appends the title "citizen of Geneva" to his name. The circumstances are worth recalling: Voltaire, at a performance of his tragedy *Oreste*, had had a dispute with a journalist called Pierre Rousseau. Jean-Jacques took advantage of the opportunity to assert his identity, begging Voltaire not to confuse him with that namesake; earlier still, Voltaire had had a bitter quarrel with J.-B. Rousseau. Jean-Jacques informed him that he was neither of these other Rousseaus, describing himself as an upright man, a sensitive being and above all a republican who loved freedom and had "renoncé aux lettres". In his excellent book published last year (*Rousseau et Voltaire*), Henri Gouhier adds: "Ainsi le malentendu de 1750 a provoqué une esquisse d'autoportrait. . . . Or c'est pour Voltaire, donc devant Voltaire qu'il se regarde: dans le miroir qui lui renvoie son image, il voit, à côté et un peu en arrière du sien, le visage de Voltaire, de Voltaire le regardant." Rousseau had determined to inhabit his foreigner's name, and to renounce any anonymous or pseudonymous publication, unlike the "famous Arquet" whom he addresses in the first *Discours* with a

deference which is not without hostility.

Rousseau's ambition to "make a name for himself" succeeded beyond all expectation. But having a name also meant, for him, the start of an unhappy career. In the *Confessions* he remarks that, as soon as he had a name, his friends, led by Diderot and Grimm, turned aside from him or else against him. Moreover, a name has an objective, almost a material existence, independent of the freedom which has gone into creating it. It can thus be the object of any kind of slander, and be assimilated into the discourse of others; in this way a false Rousseau could be substituted for the real Jean-Jacques in the eyes and ears of the public. In the first preamble to the *Confessions*, Rousseau was to write: "Puisque mon nom doit durer parmi les hommes, je ne veux pas qu'il y porte une réputation mensongère; je ne veux point qu'on me donne des vertus ou des vices que je n'aurais point, ni qu'on me peigne sous de traits qui ne furent pas les miens." By a sort of ironic logic, it was the brutal anonymous pamphlet, *Sentiment des citoyens*, published by Voltaire in 1764, which confirmed the image of a Rousseau who was harmful, mad and criminal and which made Rousseau determine to write the "memoirs of his life" long requested by his publisher. The *Confessions* would be an apology, a *vindicatio nominis*. Williams gives a highly intelligent account of the kind of rhetoric used for this purpose by Rousseau, and the sort of relationship he establishes with his reader, but he does not sufficiently bring out the kind of external provocation to which this autobiographical writing was a response. Would it have been a departure from the "textual world" within which Williams has determined to confine himself, to include in it decisive events and "concrete" conflicts, especially when these are given concrete form in letters, "libels" and "affaires"?

"To make a name for oneself." The ambition can only be conceived in relation to someone who, to start with, has no name, who is only an obscure individual, as opposed to aristocrats whose name attends them from birth and who exhibit it in their family coat of arms. When an aristocrat like La Rochefoucauld or Saint-Simon writes his life, he can trace the story of his ambitions, his disappointments and his struggles; but he does not have to describe how he became who he is, how he made himself. He is what he is, thanks to his title, from the moment of his entry into the world. Consequently, what he writes, with a few inevitable exceptions, will belong to the genre of memoirs, rather than that of autobiography, traditionally reserved for stories of a radical transformation, a religious conversion or a rise in social class. The point is well illustrated in the excellent preface written by Jean-Marie Goulemot for the *Mémoires* of Valentin Jameray-Duval: L'autobiographie, comme histoire intellectuelle, morale et psychologique d'un être particulier en ce dix-huitième siècle, est produite par des hommes venant du peuple et que leur origine semblait devoir exclure totalement ou partiellement de la culture dominante. . . . Pour le noble de souche, outre le peu d'intérêt qu'il devait porter à son itinéraire culturel qui, s'il méritait d'être évoqué, ressemblait très exactement à celle de ses pairs, même formation, même collage. . . . L'autobiographie n'avait pas de sens puisque, dès sa naissance, il était installé dans le lieu social auquel le destinait son sang.

We doubtless need to go much further back than the eighteenth century, to the age of humanism, to find the first and already complete example of this type of autobiography: it describes the adventures of an intellectual on

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The Swiss revolution

Patrice Higonnet

CÉSAR-FRÉDÉRIC DE LA HARPE
Correspondance sous la République Helvétique
Edited by Jean Charles Blandet and Marie-Claude Jequier
Tome I: Le Révolutionnaire, 16 mai 1796-4 mars 1798
584pp. Neuchâtel: La Baconnière. Sw fr 66.
28252 09562

his way to literary notoriety and high academic office. It is the admirable work in which Thomas Plater, rector of the Academy of Basel, recounts his childhood as a goatherd, his impoverished life as a wandering scholar, his sporadic studies and his career as a printing worker.

The matter of the name, which Williams subjects to a penetrating examination in its form of a quest and of an invention of the self through the fictions of language, involves at the start a social and historical dimension to which he fails to do full justice, despite some excellent observations on the sort of reception Rousseau wished for, ie, on the "author-reader dialogue".

As well as providing the model for Romantic autobiography, Rousseau's *Confessions* belong at the same time to an earlier category: to the autobiography of the low-born man of letters who, by perseverance and love of learning, acquires recognition within the "republic of letters" or (in Rousseau's case) fame throughout Europe. This kind of autobiography is not (or, not yet) Romantic, since it presupposes a situation proper to the Ancien Régime, that is, a more or less violent antagonism towards a still prevalent noble ideology. In this respect, the drafts for the *Confessions* are highly revealing. Robert Darnton's recent studies have demonstrated that Rousseau's "memoirs", while still only advertised by booksellers and not yet on sale, were eagerly demanded by a public made up of tradesmen, artisans and members of the *moyenne bourgeoisie*, who had discovered in Rousseau's work an authority which gave legitimacy to the consciousness they had acquired of their own worth and their own social significance.

However, the path from obscurity to fame is only the first part of Rousseau's story. For him, that fame and the long-coveted acquisition of a name were the start of a new story, a *historia calamitatum* – to borrow the title used by Abélard. Persecution and a persecution complex play a crucial role in the "romanticization" of Rousseau's autobiographical work, obliging him to bring forward all the proof of his innocence, to "tell all", to attempt to reconstruct (and hence to invent, as Williams rightly says) "chains of secret feelings".

In pleading not guilty, Rousseau finds himself obliged to reify – in the form of a text – the goodness which for him is bound up with his "unreifiable" freedom. Exposing an image of the self means alienating this freedom, giving occasion for misunderstanding and creating need for new proof, or providing oneself with new reassurances. There is a necessary progression from the *Confessions* to the *Dialogues* (in which Jean-Jacques becomes the subject of the conversation between Rousseau and the Frenchman), then the *Rêveries*, which were broken off by death. The project is consequently liable to constant renewal and incompleteness since, in its written materialization, it constantly sees the truth, which consciousness believes it grasps in feeling, unspoken intention and, unbreached potentiality, escaping from it. Unable to avoid the need to set up a "textual world" to realize and communicate his own identity, Rousseau reawakens the error through his desire to supply solemn proof of his innocence. He knows that the fullness of his innocence lies outside all his concrete actions, including the act of writing. And, as one finds reading Williams's book, the paradox of Rousseau's autobiography is that it musters all the resources of writing to efface the misery, persecution and calamity provoked by the extraordinary success of literary eloquence. Whether one calls it Romanticism, or by some other term, this is a characteristic shared by a number of modern works: the extreme significance attached to the self (or, if one prefers, to the individual), the obligatory recourse to fiction and the *mauvaise conscience* which turns against the treacherer implicit in language. A "post-modern" attitude would involve declaring, as Williams does at the end of his book, that fiction is primary and that we can never escape from it: "Man is an image of what is called God, not God an image of man. We are His fiction, though it goes by the name of Creation." It is possible to adopt a nihilist, as well as a theological reading of this statement. More than to Rousseau himself, it applies to the spiritual situation of some contemporary interpreters of his work.

The end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth were, literally speaking, Switzerland's golden age. Rousseau, Haller, Necker, Fuseli, de Staël, Constant, Charrière, Lavater, Euler, Tronchin, Tissot, Jomini, Mallet du Pan, Bréguet and Marat – there seems to have been no end to the array of talents produced in the space of a century by a nation whose population was roughly that of Manchester today. In so far as it can be explained at all, this blossoming was due to Switzerland's exceptional situation as a link between France and the northern Enlightenment in Germany, England and Scotland. Voltaire's exile at Ferney had for its counterpart Gibbon's stay at Lausanne, where as it happens the future historian of the Roman Empire proposed marriage to an impoverished Calvinist pastor's rancorous daughter, Suzanne Curchod, whom he was soon, and to his secret relief, pressurized by his father to give up: "I sighed as a lover and obeyed as a son." (Suzanne's future career as the wife of Necker, a great admirer of Britain, and as the mother of Mme de Staël, for whom the younger Pitt was canvassed as a husband, illustrates rather well the extent of the intellectual, social and financial ties of the English and Swiss élites of the time.) Of consequence also was Switzerland's role after the suspension of religious toleration in France in 1685 as the home base for the Huguenot diaspora in general, and for Huguenot bankers in particular. In the hundred years that followed, many of these money-men established links to London and Amsterdam and then back to Paris, where Cholevald admired their shrewdness: "If you see a Genevan banker leap from a five-storey building, follow him with confidence. You can not earn at it less than five per cent."

In the age of Wilkes and of Robespierre (as it happens, a perverted admirer of William Tell) the ties that linked Switzerland to the west and north would in and of themselves have thrown its politics into upheaval, but the revolutionary potential of the country was heightened by the persistence of political institutions that were sadly unreformed. A type of medieval democracy did survive in some Alpine and Aemilian districts, but key cantons like Soleure, Lucerne, Zurich, Fribourg, or the Bishopric of Basel were dominated by small oligarchies and in a state of "semitic atrophy". In 1785 Jefferson described Geneva as a "tyrannical aristocracy". More galling yet to their inhabitants was the condition of Lander like the Aargau or the Ticino which were subject states.

The Pays de Vaud, La Harpe's birthplace and the fulcrum of the Swiss Revolution, compounded these disabilities, very well described in Gibbon's "Letter on the Government of Bern". The Vaudois social élite, which included aristocrats like Benjamin Constant and La Harpe himself, was financially at ease. Lausanne was, after Geneva and before Basel, an important commercial and banking centre and intellectually sophisticated (it was in Lausanne, for example, that Beethoven's *Violin* was originally published). Politically, however, the Lausanneis were at once advanced in their opinions and institutionally powerless, closely watched as they were by those "tyrants", as Gibbon called them, the *bourgeois* of their Excellencies, the Messieurs de Bern, themselves ensconced in a *Petit Conseil*, an oligarchy within an oligarchy which ruled over the Grand Conseil, over Bern and over the Pays Vaudois. "What is the meaning of your behaviour?" La Harpe was once asked by a Bernese *bailli*. "Savez-vous que vous êtes nos sujets!"

La Harpe, the leading figure of the Swiss Revolution, was born at Rolle in 1754 (he died in 1839) and was educated in Protestant schools in Geneva and at Tübingen, where he secured a doctorate at the age of twenty-three. Steeped in the classics and the history of the

ancient republics, this child of the Enlightenment went off to Russia in 1783 as did many young Swiss of his day, including Marat's younger brother, the self-styled Monsieur de Boudry. There La Harpe became tutor to Catherine's grandson, the future Tsar Alexander, then aged six (La Harpe's correspondence with his ward and the Russian imperial family, also edited by Jean Charles Blandet, was published in 1978-80 and reviewed in the *TLS*, September 19, 1980). In 1790, under the pseudonym of Philantropus, he published, amazingly with Catherine's approval, six letters on Swiss politics in Johnson's *London Chronicle*. In 1795, to Alexander's sorrow, La Harpe was asked to resign his post and he left Petersburg for the distant suburbs of Geneva, where he bought a small estate for £5,000. In 1796, he sold his estate for £6,000 and moved to Paris, where he became the informal ambassador of the Swiss revolutionary movement.

Since the Vaudois had failed to liberate themselves in 1790-91, La Harpe now sensibly decided that the French should help them do so. Not all his fellow Swiss liberals agreed. Constant, whom La Harpe described as "grand démocrate en France et bon aristocrate en Suisse", did not warm to the thought of exported revolution. Mme de Staël was horrified. She had seen the Terror and had reflected on Babouvism. Some of her best friends were Bernese oligarchs; a large portion of her income was derived from the feudal dues accruing to the Barony of Coppet. La Harpe was able, however, to circumvent these objections in ways which only this correspondence has made fully clear. In 1796, the death of a cousin, Amédée de la Harpe, a general in Bonaparte's following, brought La Harpe into renewed conflict with their Excellencies at Bern who wanted to confiscate his cousin's property, and into contact with the Conqueror of Northern Italy, who wished to secure the Alpine passes. The coup of Fructidor of September 1797 enabled La Harpe to realize his private and public goals, since it brought to power in Paris the more leftist and imperialist Thermidorians, one of them, De Bry, a friend of Amédée de la Harpe, and another, Reubel, celebrated for his avarice, and born close to Basel in Alsace, a man with a keen interest in Swiss money and politics. The Bernese were very rich and a tempting prey. Acting on the pretext of an insurrection in the Vaud, a French army invested Lausanne on January 28, 1798, to La Harpe's delight.

Matters did not go smoothly. The course of events in Switzerland closely resembled the chaotic fate of the Batavian Republic, the relevance of whose politics to his own problems La Harpe clearly understood. In Switzerland as in Holland, as suggested by the lines laid down in Simon Schama's excellent account in *Patriots and Reformers*, the categories aristocrat/democrat and federalizer/centralizer did not overlap. The partisans of the short-lived "République Lemanique, Une et Indivisible" (which lasted for a few weeks and whose territory overlapped with the *ci-devant* Canton de Vaud) resisted a larger, centralized "République Helvétique, Une et Indivisible". Nor did it help that French and Russian troops (under orders to capture La Harpe and to ship him back to Russia) ravaged the countryside until Freud's favourite general, Masséna, defeated Suvarov at the second battle of Zürich in 1799.

Under the guidance of Reubel's representative, appropriately named Rapinat, French officials pillaged their allies' property and used the captured Bernese Treasury to finance Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. In January 1800, conservative republicans staged a coup and La Harpe once again went into French exile. The restoration of titles and feudal dues occasioned more coups and peasant revolts. In 1797, Reubel advised the Baslois radical Ochs to "execute his executioners", but after the 18th Brumaire, Bonaparte's was of a different mind: "Monsieur Ochs," he peremptorily remarked, "la Révolution est finie." In 1802, after some months of near anarchy, the Helvétique Republic lapsed. The First Consul imposed on the Swiss an Act of Mediation which, given his centralizing bent, paradoxically created a confederated state whose structure was more altered than destroyed in 1813, when La Harpe surfaced, as counsel to Tsar Alexander, then ruler of Europe.

The letters, most of them heretofore unpublished and now edited with extreme care and intelligence by Jean Charles Blandet and Marie-Claude Jequier, the director of the rebranded Historical Museum at Lausanne, bring welcome additions to our knowledge of also make clear the intensity of La Harpe's devotion to the politicized principles of the Enlightenment, to equality of course but to liberty and fraternity especially. He would have been very surprised indeed to hear that his world-historical task was to make Switzerland safe for bankers. His first goal was to reshape and "helvetize" the political institutions of his country. In this goal he essentially succeeded, since the modern Confederation goes back to this period, as do some political structures of the Vaud, whose centralized cantonal administration and stubborn resistance to federal imposition are now, as they then became, cardinal principles of Swiss politics. La Harpe's correspondence (together with the letters for 1798-1800 that will appear in two further volumes) give proof of his commitment to a broad if nascent Helvetic nationalism. A more localized Swiss patriotism had existed for centuries, but was discredited by its retrograde social and political implications. The Vaudois especially had little use for provincial particularisms; and the correspondence testifies to the genuineness of La Harpe's nationalistic feelings. He did indeed look to French help, but it was never his intent to set up a puppet régime. Though prepared to support an exclusively French-speaking Swiss state if need be, he fully understood that the true independence of Switzerland presupposed some agreement with the inhabitants of the German-speaking cantons, despite their "jargon barbare" and their "moeurs antiques".

The most taking aspect of these letters lies in their revelations of La Harpe's "inner space" and of his sense that society could be reshaped through politics without excessive cost. In 1797-8, French Republicanism was already on the run, haunted on the left by the spectre of Babouvism; pressurized on the right by a royalist underground; and, since Fructidor, dependent on arrogant and thieving generals of whom Bonaparte was only the most ambitious. La Harpe had no such sense of constraint. He was curious about Babouvism and urged his correspondents to read the printed accounts of Babeuf's trial at Vendôme: "vous y trouverez une foule de choses intéressantes". Though his friends at home warned him about "le triomphe de la canaille", he took no heed. For him, Switzerland was divisible into two parts: "Le régime oligarchique" on the right; and on the left, "la caste des ilotes (c'est à dire la nation)". To be sure, some of these Spartan slaves bought and sold estates while others worked on them; but this distinction did not affect La Harpe's calculations. His optimism and nationalistic zeal lifted him above social fear. To commune with such a mind is bracing for a generation that sees nuclear holocaust as the likely alternative to social immobility. La Harpe's optimism will surely arouse nostalgia in contemporary Lausanne, where it is commonly said that social convention deems perverse that which the law does not require.

After 1845-48 and the liberals' victory over the clerical Sonderbund, Switzerland withdrew from world history. In the larger scheme of things, her historical task then became to harbour conspirators who had tried and failed to make world history elsewhere. There were for example Lenin and Bakunin in Zürich and at La Chaux-de-Fonds. After 1870 the Canton de Vaud took in errant refugees from the Grande Nation: the Bonapartist Viollet-le-Duc at Lausanne; the Communist Courbet at La Tour-de-Peilz; and Gambetta ("le paris d'été, je suis") at Clarens, the site of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. To protect one's neighbour against the effect of their own folly is a noble task. Still, as these letters remind us, it is a stance that hardly generates the excitement of *la République Helvétique*, when news from Lausanne was capable of thrilling, in La Harpe's own words, "tous les amis de la liberté".

The further volumes of this publication will be: *Tomes II: Le "Chargé d'affaires" à Paris (5 mars - 21 juillet 1798); III: Le Directeur helvétique (juillet 1798 - janvier 1800) and IV: L'Exil (janvier 1800 - février 1803).*

Cracks in the consensus

C. J. Hughes

HANS TSCHÄNI
Wer regiert die Schweiz? Eine kritische Untersuchung über den Einfluss von Lobby und Verbänden in der schweizerischen Demokratie
199pp. Zürich: Orell Füssli. Sw fr 29.80.
3280 01 490 5
RUDI BRASSEL and others (Editors)
Zauberformel: Fauler Zauber? SP-Bundesratsbeteiligung und Opposition in der Schweiz
272pp. Basel: Z-Vorlag. Sw fr 20.
3399 00 064 1
JEAN-FRANÇOIS AUBERT
Exposé des institutions politiques de la Suisse à partir de quelques affaires controversées
336pp. Lausanne: Payot. Sw fr 18.
3260 00 010 4

The distinctive governmental institutions of Switzerland are the Federal Council (ie, the executive cabinet), the Referendum, and Federalism. The Federal Council of seven ministers is composed from the four major political parties in the ratio 2:2:2:1 whereby the Socialist Party has two members, and the three right-wing parties (private-enterprise, Catholic, and agrarian) have the remainder. The Referendum in Switzerland is a permanent institution, with a quite different dynamic to the one-off plebiscite, from which the parties and pressure groups themselves have arisen and to which they have adapted their structures. The art of legislating, for example, has become the art of circumventing the referendum threat, with the inhabitants of the German-speaking cantons, despite their "jargon barbare" and their "moeurs antiques".

The most taking aspect of these letters lies in their revelations of La Harpe's "inner space" and of his sense that society could be reshaped through politics without excessive cost. In 1797-8, French Republicanism was already on the run, haunted on the left by the spectre of Babouvism; pressurized on the right by a royalist underground; and, since Fructidor, dependent on arrogant and thieving generals of whom Bonaparte was only the most ambitious. La Harpe had no such sense of constraint. He was curious about Babouvism and urged his correspondents to read the printed accounts of Babeuf's trial at Vendôme: "vous y trouverez une foule de choses intéressantes". Though his friends at home warned him about "le triomphe de la canaille", he took no heed. For him, Switzerland was divisible into two parts: "Le régime oligarchique" on the right; and on the left, "la caste des ilotes (c'est à dire la nation)". To be sure, some of these Spartan slaves bought and sold estates while others worked on them; but this distinction did not affect La Harpe's calculations. His optimism and nationalistic zeal lifted him above social fear. To commune with such a mind is bracing for a generation that sees nuclear holocaust as the likely alternative to social immobility. La Harpe's optimism will surely arouse nostalgia in contemporary Lausanne, where it is commonly said that social convention deems perverse that which the law does not require.

Tschäni finds the cause for such symptoms of malaise as there are in a departure from the textbook teaching of democracy and constitutionalism. But when his feelings are aroused he appeals to more earthy philosophies. Faced with foreigners owning land in Switzerland (not Swiss owning land and factories abroad) he asserts, "without any xenophobia", that this is intolerable because "a State to be taken seriously must be able to deal with its own land as it pleases".

Tschäni is an editor of a distinguished Zürich paper. His early work, *Profil der Schweiz*, was comfortably orthodox, reassuring, entertaining. In 1972, however, he started drawing conclusions from his own witty reportage of the nastier side of Switzerland, eg, the hounding of conscientious objectors, in his admirable booklet *Diktator des Patriotismus. Wer regiert die Schweiz?* presents to a wide readership – it has now been translated into French and Italian – after selling out in German – a view of Switzerland which has been familiar to the professional student of Swiss institutions for a quarter of a century. The general effect is not that of the west and war of politics, but of a sort of sludge or felt (*Verfälschung* is Tschäni's term) as one tries to follow the threads of the economic interests of members of advisory committees and legislative bodies, and the influence of the lobbies. My personal impression, however, is that the multitude of telling facts adduced here is indeed incontrovertible, but that this is the necessary by-product of a system that tries to put textbook democracy and constitutionalism into practice.

Zauberformel: Fauler Zauber? (the "magic formula") of the ratio of members in the Federal Council is a collection of some twenty essays and interviews. There is an interview with Max Friesch, and an essay by the notorious Jean Ziegler. The names of contributors or interviewees include François Masnata, Hanspeter Krieger, Hans Schläppli, René Meylan, interviewees include François Masnata, Hanspeter Krieger, Hans Schläppli, René Meylan, known sympathizers with the Swiss Social Democratic movement. It is a plea for the two Socialist ministers to leave the Federal Council, so that the Socialist Party can be the nucleus of a genuine opposition in the Federal parliament. This would effectively solve some of Tschäni's problems, and create others. The spark that set off this explosion was the rejection of the official Socialist candidate for the vacant seat in the Federal Council in 1983 and her replacement by a more right-wing Socialist (an event which has happened before). Since then it has been the Freisinnig party which has bagged the credit for electing the first woman to the Federal Council. It is widely perceived that socialists have been short-changed in the rewards derived from a national consensus, and at the same time they seem to be losing their electoral basis among the young.

Jean-François Aubert is professor of Constitutional Law at Neuchâtel, and has successively been a member of both Houses of the Federal legislature. This second edition of a well-known text is unchanged apart from the addition of some twenty extra pages to update it. The controversies examined are: the Jura Question, National Insurance, Nuclear Reactors, and the rejected new paragraph in the Constitution about the management of the economy. These case-studies are planned to give the reader a feel for the living constitution joined to the detailed law of the land. It would be a book for the English reader who had a fair knowledge of Swiss political institutions and who had available the Federal Constitution and the fundamental statutes connected with it. There are always too few books to lead on from the very general literature in praise of Switzerland to the detailed books on specific institutions and events, and this is a lucid, lively contribution. Aubert spends about four pages on the problems opened by the *Zauberformel* book, and two on those raised by Tschäni, and a great deal on the matters which would widen the horizon of a young jurist.

These three books exemplify the contribution to political debate of journalism, political studies and law, respectively. They also exemplify the liberal-radicalism which has still not quite lost its former radicalism, the intelligent and moderate voice of social democracy, and the high-bourgeois liberalism which is the accredited voice of Switzerland abroad, and of 5 per cent of the electorate. These are attractive political positions. The gaps in sympathy should also be noticed: the socialists scarcely mention the contemporary industrial proletariat, the *Fremdarbeiter*, who, if they had a voice, would vote socialist or Christian Democrat, and the Christian Democrat (Catholic) party itself is, as usual, silent.

Making way for women

Deborah Steiner

CLAIRE TORRACINTA-PACHE
Le Pouvoir est pour demain: Les femmes dans la politique suisse
170pp. Lausanne: Editions de l'Aire. Sw fr 20.

On December 7, 1983, Switzerland's federal parliament rejected the first woman to stand for membership of its ruling council. Lilian Uchtenhagen had every qualification for the job, except the requisite sex. Long years of political experience and an advanced degree in economics counted for little against the emotional fragility that critics saw in her, and a fatal extravagance in her choice of hats. Mrs Uchtenhagen's analysis of her defeat was simple: "Je suis femme et je suis socialiste."

Outrage on the candidate's behalf moved Claire Torracinta-Pache to produce an analysis of the role of women in Swiss politics and to detail the gap between the formal political equality they enjoy and the effective exercise of power, still firmly in the hands of men. Hers is a familiar tale of under-representation (one woman for every ten men in political life), of women's concentration on the lowest rungs of party organizations and their relegation to tasks thought appropriate to female skills.

Torracinta-Pache's argument for increased female representation rests, in part, on the unique contribution that her sex can make towards an "autre politique". In her interviews with women politicians, she discovers among the qualities a woman has to offer compassion, humanity and the ability to take a broader view than men. Less tainted by concern for social standing and careers, women are better able to see to the heart of political questions. But arguments which point to "otherness" lead, inevitably, to isolation. If women are creatures so distinct from men, so perfectly disinterested, why should they suffer the presence of men in political debate? Radical feminists reject conventional politics altogether, denying that any change can come from a patriarchal system designed, controlled and administered by men. They turn instead to their discrete form of politics, to formal women's organizations and informal groups.

Separatism or integration? The author seems unable to decide as she pursues a circuitous course through the various forms of "alternative" politics open to Swiss women. She hopes that reform is possible from within, through the increased representation of women in the parties, yet believes that revolution alone can bring about the changes she desires. According to the French feminist, Yvette Roudy, who delivers an impassioned plea at the end of the book, this should be a socialist revolution. But socialism and feminism can make uneasy bedfellows. Marx and Engels gave women scant consideration, subordinating their particular oppression to the struggle of the proletariat. Much earlier, the Declaration of the Rights of Man provoked an answering document on behalf of women. Its author, Olympe de Gournay, ended her life on the scaffold. No similar fate awaits Torracinta-Pache, whose revolution is a mild-mannered one, and involves no move more radical than an equitable redistribution of household tasks between men and women. Careful civic instruction in the schoolroom and a concerted effort to promote women by the media and civil service are the lame remedies she offers.

Torracinta-Pache's retreat from the barricades is a disappointing one. If ever women stood in need of a strong advocate, it is in Switzerland, once in the vanguard of the movement. The first feminist magazine was printed in Zürich in 1833; in 1867, the same city was the first to bestow an official university diploma on a woman; by 1893, Switzerland could count almost 6,000 women's organizations. But after the First World War society regrouped itself along the lines not of sex but of class. Women had to wait until 1971 to gain the right to vote in federal elections. In one Swiss canton, Appenzel, they are still denied participation in local referenda. Until the law was changed last year, Swiss nationality could only be transmitted through the male line.

Since publication, events have overtaken this book. On October 2, 1984, Elizabeth Croll was elected to the same body that Lilian Uchtenhagen had failed to enter. Like Geraldine Ferraro, the candidate was made the victim of a smear campaign directed against her husband. In Switzerland, however, the campaign backfired, and reluctant parliamentarians were moved to vote on her behalf.

Way off the beam

Martin Gibson

JACQUES GRINEVALD, ANDRÉ GSPONER, LUCILE HANOUZ and PIERRE LEHMANN
La Quadrature du CERN
186pp. Lausanne: Editions d'en bas. Sw fr 20.
28290 0060 9

This book attempts to look critically at all aspects of CERN, the international particle physics research laboratory on the Franco-Swiss border near Geneva. CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, was set up and named when "nuclear" was an accurate and unemotional adjective for a wide field of study. The term covered nuclear energy, with which CERN has never been connected, as well as the fundamental physics of nuclei, nuclear forces and elementary particles, research into which is its continuing function.

The true field of study of the international particle physics community is the deepest level to which matter can be probed, with the laws of force and symmetry between the elementary particles of which matter is made. Deepening understanding of the structure of matter and its laws is the invisible product for which CERN exists, and for which its member state governments pay a total of 600 million Swiss francs a year. Major advances leading to unification of the theory of electromagnetic and weak forces, announced from CERN recently and widely reported in the press, emphasized the nature and quality of research done there.

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The authors of *La Quadrature du CERN* are concerned for the welfare of mankind and seeing that in many fields man is making wrong use of resources by choices leading to impasse rather than to real benefit, have chosen to criticize the spending at CERN, and to present the social aspects of the organization in the most damaging way possible. Many of the points which they labour are real ones which deserve attention, possibly in some cases more than they have received. What is lacking is any recognition of the goodwill and serious attention which are already applied to these matters, frequently with notable success.

But the most surprising challenge made by the authors is that work done at CERN is closely linked to military ends. The evidence presented is tenuous in the extreme, showing no link stronger than a marginal overlap of subject-matter. The main argument seems to be by analogy with the United States, where military funding of fundamental research is more common. Much is made of a link between particle beams for research accelerators and particle beam weapons – without mentioning that the latter exist only in the mind. Particle physicists know, and perhaps have a duty to point out, that "star wars" programmes of particle beam weapons will be no more than science fiction so long as particle beam physics is subject to its present limits.

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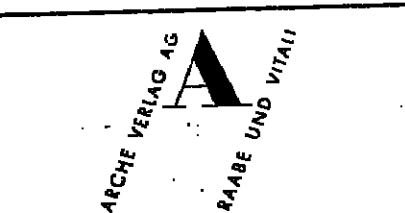
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Arche Literatur Kalender
1985

John Coile

Diplomatic business

Georg Kreis

Most major powers have documented their foreign policy in large editions of state papers. As a rule, however, the reason for these publications was not the fact that they were major powers but rather that they had recently been involved in a war. The documentation provided concerned the pre-war years in particular and was intended to justify government action in the eyes of its own citizens, of the other states concerned and of world opinion. Switzerland has never been subject to this pressure and saw no need to vindicate its policies by publishing diplomatic papers. Nevertheless, in 1975 a large-scale editorial project (of which the present writer was part) was launched to document Swiss foreign policy in fifteen volumes, from the foundation of the federal state in 1848 to the end of the Second World War.

The chief incentive for this enterprise came from historians working on the years 1939-45, and the process began with a short work by Edgar Bonjour of Basel University, *Swiss Neutrality: its history and meaning*, published in London in 1946. It was a work of an apologetic nature which sought to win sympathy for the Swiss position from the victorious Allies. Two decades later the same historian was commissioned by the federal government to write a report on foreign policy during the war years, prompted by the publication of the records of the Third Reich, in which Switzerland was not seen to best advantage. As a result of the 1970 "Bonjour Report", historians at the Institut Universitaire des Hautes Etudes Internationales in Geneva initiated a comprehensive documentation of the history of Swiss foreign policy.

The publication of these documents serves several purposes. One is to stimulate further academic research into Swiss foreign policy. Another is to explain Swiss thinking and conduct in international affairs and to contribute to the Swiss presence abroad. It will also ensure

that this aspect of Swiss history is not written solely on the basis of material already published in other countries. Finally, it is intended to stimulate domestic interest in foreign policy issues, motivation being otherwise rather slack in view of Switzerland's size and neutral position.

It is no coincidence that the volume dealing with the years 1918-19 (Volume 7.1) should have been published first, for this is the period when Switzerland was beginning to activate its foreign policy, and when Geneva became the seat of the League of Nations (not least because the British government wanted on no account to have the League installed in France or under French influence in Belgium). There was much discussion in Switzerland at that time - as there is today with regard to the UN - as to whether membership of an international organization which made provision for imposing economic and military sanctions could be reconciled with neutrality. This volume, like the others, shows that concern for neutrality constituted, and still constitutes, only a part of Swiss foreign policy. This has to be emphasized since the threat of National Socialism led to a distorted interpretation of foreign relations: foreign policy was equated with a policy of neutrality and neutrality with the Swiss national interest. Switzerland had an image of itself as a mere vehicle for the noble ideas of neutrality, whereas, in political reality, neutrality is only one means of preserving Swiss independence.

Another major task of Swiss foreign policy was and is to secure supplies of food, coal and other raw materials. Besides imports, attention was naturally also directed towards the promotion of exports, on which some two-thirds of the national economy depended. The numerous bilateral negotiations on trade agreements occupy a prominent place in all the volumes. Before 1914 it was even officially declared that Switzerland did not need a foreign policy as such: "We are not a major na-

tion. Our relations with foreign countries are not political, as are those of a major power. They concern cultural affairs, security and above all commerce. Commercial interests are primary" (Volume 5). Important foreign policy concerns prior to 1914 included the repurchase of the Gotthard railway-line, constructed with Italian and German assistance, the linking of the Simplon line with the French railway network, and the expansion of goods traffic on the Rhine to Basel.

During the First World War (Volume 6) the basic tasks remained the same. But there were new ones too, humanitarian and peace-building tasks, such as repatriating the war-wounded and mediating in peace talks. Since Switzerland harboured numerous Russian émigrés the question of how to respond to the Bolshevik challenge in 1917-18 was particularly urgent.

After the war came the first modest development of the diplomatic service (it was to be further expanded after 1945). On this, as on other issues, the detailed documentation brings to light internal differences of opinion. Whereas the department of foreign affairs argued for an increase in diplomatic representation, the department of commerce, seeing little advantage in such a course, advocated the establishment of consulates, and in the main achieved its objective. Opinions also differed on whether the government or parliament was competent to decide such issues.

Switzerland was regularly faced with the question of whether recognition should be granted to a particular régime. In March 1920 the government decided to acknowledge the *de facto* mission of the Armenian Republic. The position of the English and French on the Armenian question was also discussed; one example being England's threat to allow the Turks to keep Constantinople only if they halted the Armenian persecutions (Volume

7.2). Just as foreign state papers occasionally contain facts concerning Switzerland, so these Swiss documents frequently provide information on the policies of other states. These are mostly fairly general accounts, but there is also some specific information which is new even for the countries concerned.

A conspicuous feature of the ensuing period (1920-25) was Switzerland's involvement in the organizations established to settle international disputes (Volume 9). Swiss lawyers played a leading role in drafting arbitration agreements and gained considerable influence in the development of international law. During the years 1930-33 Switzerland experienced the delayed effects of world depression. As a result, foreign trade claimed even greater attention in the formulation of policy. As regards attempts to resolve international disputes, Switzerland remained cautious, in the belief that the influence of small states is slight. This also applies to the disarmament conference held in Geneva in 1932-33 (Volume 10).

The volumes of this edition are not planned for publication in chronological order but depend on the availability of the various editors. Every Swiss university undertook to set up a team to edit at least one of the fifteen volumes. With several teams engaged simultaneously, working to rigorous standards of scholarship (without the burden of self justification) it has been possible to publish six volumes in a short time. Further volumes are already completed in manuscript and it can be expected that by 1990 the whole enterprise, under the competent leadership of Jacques Freymond of Geneva, will be brought to a successful conclusion.

The Swiss Diplomatic Documents are published by Benteli in Bern. The following volumes have already appeared: 5 (1904-1914), 6 (1914-1918), 7.1 (1918-1919), 7.2 (1919-1920), 9 (1925-1929), 10 (1930-1933).

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Martin Gilbert

EMMANUEL HAYMANN

Le Camp du Bout du Monde: 1942, Des enfants
juifs de France à la frontière suisse
260pp Lausanne: Favre, Sw fr 28.70.
2.8289 0139

In the mythology of the Second World War, Switzerland stands high among those countries which are to be praised. Bravely preserving a beneficent neutrality, she armed herself and prepared to fight if need be to preserve her independence. Home of the League of Nations, she maintained, on Swiss soil, one of the few wartime international organizations of goodwill, the International Red Cross. Completely surrounded by various countries of the Axis - Germany, Italy and Vichy France - she opened her borders to Allied prisoners-of-war in flight and to civilian refugees.

This picture is certainly an accurate one. It is by no means complete, however, as *Le Camp du Bout du Monde* makes clear. Emmanuel Haymann acknowledges that 30,000 Jewish refugees were allowed to stay in Switzerland during the war years, but his book is dedicated to the memory of his cousin, Heinz Laufer, who was gassed at Auschwitz. Laufer was one of nearly 10,000 Jews who sought entry to Switzerland during 1942, at the time of mass deportations from France, but were turned back at the frontier by the Swiss police.

The policy of turning Jews back was first put into operation on August 13, 1942. It applied even to those refugees who had managed to cross into Switzerland. These Jews, most of them women and children, were arrested by the Swiss police, taken to the border, and forced to cross back into France. "Under current practice," the Swiss police instruction of September 25, 1942, read, "refugees on the ground of race alone are not political refugees."

The timing of this decision could not have been worse. Four days after the borders were closed, nearly a thousand Jews were deported from France to Auschwitz, of whom twenty-seven were children under the age of four. Each one of these children was gassed within

hours of reaching the camp. Henceforth, more than a thousand Jews were deported from France to Auschwitz every week for nearly two years.

Haymann has written a bitter but forceful book, part history, part memoir. It is a book which stresses the extent to which those who might have helped became not only bystanders, but, in a sense, collaborators in the terrible work which Germany, unaided, could not have done so thoroughly. He tells the story of two Jewish girls, Mila Racine and Marianne Cohn, both of whom smuggled hundreds of Jewish children into Switzerland, and to safety. Marianne Cohn, then twenty-two years old, was tortured and shot by the Germans on July 8, 1944, a month after the Allies had landed on the Normandy beaches. Also caught by the Germans, Mila Racine was deported to Germany, where, during a march of prisoners, she was killed in an Allied air attack.

The heroism of the few contrasts painfully with the silence of many. The author is convinced that more could have been done for those who might have been saved. The detailed historical background to the closing of the Swiss borders has been published some years ago; this book provides an emotional, but no less compelling account.

Inevitably, the Jewish writer will focus on the area of governmental hostility. There was, however, another aspect of Switzerland and the Holocaust; on which Haymann touches only briefly, but which merits attention. He refers to the message sent from Geneva on

Thienfuss, subtitled "A Magazine for the over-stretched intellectual", has for some years earned a world-wide welcome as an intelligent, knowledgeable and visually satisfying potpourri of old and new texts, drawings and photographs, selected (for the most part) from books published by the enterprising Diogenes Verlag. The latest issue, No 11, edited by Franz Sutter and Daniel Keel, is no exception. Like so much else in 1984 it stands under the aegis of George Orwell. Not all the texts are equally valuable; much space is wasted on an excerpt from Roland Topor's *Le Bar de l'avenir*, which asks us to believe that a visitor from 2039 would be able to understand the language of 1984. But the book is a gem, and many excellent lithographs and cartoons.

August 10, 1942, alerting the Western world to the Nazi plan to murder "three and a half to four million Jews". This message was sent by a young Jew, Gerhardt Riegner, who was in Switzerland as one of the representatives of the World Jewish Congress, the headquarters of which was in New York. What the author does not say is that Riegner's message was one of many hundreds of reports on the Holocaust which were sent from Switzerland between 1941 and 1944, to London, New York and Jerusalem.

Throughout the war, Switzerland was a collection point for information smuggled out of Nazi Germany. The first news of the mass slaughter in the Riga ghetto was brought to Switzerland by an eye-witness who had managed to escape. Also in Switzerland, the Polish-born Zionist, Chaim Pozner, received from Germany and sent on to the West several urgent messages of imminent destruction, including the first reports of the deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. Pozner was one of the group of Jewish officials in Switzerland who also organized emigration certificates and food parcels to be sent to occupied Europe, for the rescue and sustenance of Jews under Nazi rule. This work, too, deserves recognition, and could not have been carried out without the tacit approval of the Swiss authorities.

Switzerland thus served simultaneously as witness to three separate facets of the Holocaust dilemma: as a place of refuge, as a place which denied refuge, and as a transmission point for rescue efforts and secret information.

sounds outdated even today; nor are all the translations beyond reproach. What escapes from the bottle in Orwell's essay on Zamyatin, for instance, is not "genius" (*das Genie*), as we are here told, but a "genie" or "djinn" - a very different kettle of fish! But for the modern successors of the princes of Serendip there are some splendid pickings: Joseph Roth on the new Anti-Christ, for instance; the first German translation of Camus's essay "Ni victimes, ni bourreaux"; Witold Gombrowicz's humanist attack on Sartre; E. W. Heine's analysis of the "loss of centre" in modern architecture; and many excellent lithographs and cartoons.

In defence of culture

Joseph Rykwert

JACOB BURCKHARDT
*Die Kunst der Betrachtung: Aufsätze und
Vorlesungen*
480pp. Cologne: Dumont. DM58.
3781 1569 4
The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance
Translated by James Palmes; revised and
edited by Peter Murray
277pp. Secker and Warburg. £30.
022608047 1

Jacob Burckhardt returned to his home town of Basel as Professor of History in 1858, when he was forty, and retired in 1893. In 1869 he met Nietzsche, who was appointed to the chair of Classical Philology at Basel at the alarmingly early age of twenty-four; he resigned through ill health in 1877. During the period between 1858 and 1893 Burckhardt also taught history at the local secondary school (where Nietzsche taught Greek) but he gave it up when he was appointed to a second chair, of History of Art, from which he retired earlier (in 1885); his successor was his great pupil Heinrich Wölfflin.

There was no one else of comparable intellectual stature in the small Swiss town at the time and Burckhardt and Nietzsche were inevitably thrown together. But although both had a great love of the German language, and both were lucid, stylish masters of it, they also shared by this time a distrust of things German. Both looked to France as their cultural haven. Both men were equally obsessed with history; and yet for one history was a model, and memory the only possible guarantee of renewal; while for the other selective forgetfulness was a condition of rebirth.

By the time Burckhardt met Nietzsche the major enterprise of his life was already formulated in his mind. He would chronicle and chart the growth and nature of European culture; but this major undertaking remained a tacit one: it would have seemed laughably ambitious to label something which he considered the justification of his being. Memory was to be the defence of the spirit against the fast approaching threat of barbarism. As time went on he saw increasingly clearly that Europe was to decline into great uniformed and militaristic industrial states, where there would be long periods of subjection to individual Führers since, bereft of any principle, people would have to accept saviours. He had no idea of the ultimate optimism of his two great contemporaries, Marx and Ruskin. The constitutional freedom of the city-states and smaller monarchies seemed to belong to an irretrievable past and the fate of culture would be in the hands of a small élite: only a consciousness of its high calling, and a self-denying devotion, would ensure the survival of inherited values through a dark age. Asceticism in the face of power and wealth were to him the marks of that élite. And his own devotion to the history of culture was a mark of that ascetic withdrawal, the setting of principle above contingency. So much is clear from his lectures and the papers which were published after his death, and from his letters. Yet very few of his contemporaries were aware of the scale of his undertaking. For most of them, and for the two or three generations which followed, it was as a historian of art that he was principally remembered: he was one of the founding fathers of the discipline.

He had begun his studies in theology, with the idea of following his father into the ministry; that too he had in common with Nietzsche. The Burckhardts were a patrician Basel family of merchants, lawyers and clergy: Jacob's father was - to put it into English (or at least Anglican) terms - the Dean of Basel Cathedral. But Jacob found it impossible to preach a Christ whose life, as his teachers convinced him, was only a myth. In spite of some rumours at the time, he never became anti-Christian or even particularly anticlerical, and intermittently asserted his faith in a "Providence God". After completing his first degree, he went to Berlin to study history with his father's grudging assent. The great Berlin teachers were August Böckh, Johann-Gustav Droysen and above all Leopold von Ranke. Unfortunately Böckh was rather distant and Droysen left for an appointment at Kiel; Burckhardt

who admired Ranke immensely, did not get on with him personally and yet Ranke's teaching was a revelation. In a letter to an older friend he describes the effect of his Berlin studies: he had previously "loved his science on hearsay, (as the Knights did in *Don Quixote*) and suddenly here it was . . . before me in gigantic proportions - and I had to lower my eyes. Now I am firmly resolved to devote my existence to it, perhaps at the cost of a happy home life . . ."

Ranke's greatness lay in his unwillingness to bend his reading of the causal relationship of events to any theoretical or political "higher" necessity; as well as in his greedy, almost gargantuan appetite for primary sources; as he might have admitted himself, it also depended on the clarity, fluency and dramatic power of his prose. But for Ranke a primary source was always a written source: a charter, chronicle or perhaps a poem; and sometimes a printed book; sources were always direct and verbal, they were "about" events and views. Now this is exactly where Burckhardt's insight, if elementary, was so brilliant. He saw that any object from the past might be a "source" with as good a title to the historian's attention as the written word. Or perhaps something more than just a source: the object and the historian's perception of it, were in fact the re-enactment of the historical event. It followed that works of art - buildings as well as paintings and sculptures and indeed musical compositions - might indirectly reveal attitudes and intentions which words sometimes obscure.

That intuition did not come directly from Ranke. What focused Burckhardt's attention on professional, academic history of art was the personal sympathy (denied him in the relationship with Ranke) freely given by another Berlin teacher, Franz Kugler, who was taught that relatively new discipline, but was also a poet, dramatist and musician. Kugler's house was a home to Burckhardt in Berlin, and with Kugler he discussed his first art-historical enterprise, new ways of dating "Byzantine" - the word *Romanisch* was still unknown to him - churches in western Germany. The journey to western Germany had been undertaken first at Ranke's direction, but proved momentous for the young Burckhardt. He fell in with a group of liberal and literary pan-Germans; in spite of the difference in ultimate political conviction, he found them exciting and enchanting company. He visited the Low Countries, and as a result of this produced the first of his guides, to the art of the Belgian towns, which was published in Düsseldorf in 1842.

His writing was closely linked to his many travels at that period. Besides the time spent in the west of Germany and Holland, mainly in Bonn and in Cologne (Cologne Cathedral, on which work had started again, seemed to him the greatest of the world's buildings - his rhapsodies on it recall Goethe's enthusiasm for Strasbourg Cathedral), he had also spent six months in Paris, and been to Italy more than once. Basel was far away, narrow, provincial, un-German. Yet he went back to it, to begin teaching at the university, at first without an appointment or salary, then with the temporary title of Professor. He also edited a conservative newspaper for eighteen months and got involved in the Swiss pre-echoes of the coming *Kulturkampf*. There was trouble when in his lectures on painting he took a cooler view of the "Nazarene" school than some of his audience liked. So in May 1846 he made his way to Rome, and stayed in Italy until Kugler brought him back to Berlin, to recast and enlarge the Italian section of his *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei* which had been first published ten years earlier.

Although Italy was to be his other home, in his youth a love of all things German possessed him. He went so far as to maintain that only a definite *Anschluss* (though even then he added that it should not be *political*) to Germany could save Switzerland, since the decline of her people could only be remedied by a return to origins. It needed the revolution of 1848 to disabuse him finally of his pan-Germanism; direct experience of the 1870 campaign in France was to do the same for Nietzsche. Not that he had ever been a populist; from his earliest letters, it is clear that his bent was conservative, in religion as in politics. He was a monarchist in matters German even if he was to share some

of Nietzsche's contempt for Bismarck and the Hohenzollerns.

By the time of the German upheavals in 1848 he was well out of it again in Basel, stating his ironic detachment from events, and his uselessness in all matters political. And he remained there, losing touch rather pointedly with his "liberal" German friends, most of whom had been involved in the leftist politics of the revolutionary year. When Basel became too confining for him, he undertook to produce a guide to Italian art, which became his *Cicerone*: since he called it "Tschitsch" for short, it is clear that he pronounced it in the Italianate, not in the bogus-classical way which was becoming popular among philologists. It appeared in 1855, was dedicated to Kugler and was immediately and lastingly popular. As with all his other books, having produced it, Burckhardt would take very little further interest in its fate. Proofs and revisions were handed out as chores to pupils and disciples. Recommending the *Cicerone* to his students much later in life, Burckhardt remarked that he could do so without any sense of shame, since very little of it was by now from his hand.

The general history of European culture was taking shape in his mind during the early years of his teaching at Basel. It was to begin with the time of Constantine the Great, with the decline of the ancient institution and the conversion of the Empire. In fact the times of the Barbarian invasions, and the dark ages of Europe, the violent disorders of the social fabric, reminded him forcibly of his own times. *The Age of Constantine* had appeared in 1852; the climax of his project was to be an account of the Renaissance. That was to be his best-known book, and to generate much other work. But the many monographs linking the two landmarks never came to be written.

As the very word implies, the Renaissance was discovered by the French. Michelet claimed it for them in 1855, the year of the *Cicerone*. But the description of the new historical territory was Burckhardt's, and nothing has appeared which makes the reading of his *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* supererogatory. For several years he worked on a great history of the Italian art of the period. Only the first volume of that project, the one dealing with architecture, was published, though there are fragments on the painting and sculpture, on collectors, on connoisseurship. A three-year interlude of teaching at the new Polytechnic in Zürich confirmed his professional commitment to the history of art.

As he practised it, the history of art was integral to the history of culture, which was indeed the nucleus of history proper and could not have any independent, unhistorical or supra-historical "method". But then works of art have an integrity as untainted as any written source; and the historian's first duty was to enjoy them, and to encourage this enjoyment in others. So the *Cicerone* was subtitled: "an introduction to the enjoyment of Italy's works of art". But enjoyment had a counterpart: distaste and even revulsion. And Burckhardt felt quite free to voice his appreciation and his dislike of any work of art, contemporary or past, of Wagner and of Rembrandt; as he indeed did in the notorious essay on Rembrandt, which even earned the otherwise faithful Wölfflin's disapproval. Rembrandt he presented as the Protestant painter of subjective impression - the diametrical opposite of the Catholic Rubens, whom Burckhardt of course loved. Perhaps his main accusation was that Rembrandt dissolves all objects in his paintings in the interest of conveying the quality of light; his control of light is always at the expense of the object, of space at the expense of the body. The sheer dislike of the plebeian is evident in the scathing treatment of the Dresden self-portrait with Saskia (also known as "The Prodigal Son"). Of course that distaste is related to his bewildered disapproval of what was happening in French painting "after Delacroix".

But the sharing of his pleasure was an important part of his teaching duties, as Burckhardt saw them. That is why he often gave "popular" lectures on general topics to lay audiences. And works of art were always in context for him: that is why, too, he lectured on matters like ancient Greek cookery or the cultural function of processions. Many such fragments were texts prepared for lectures. He kept all

this material at home, and would not consider having it printed in his lifetime, maintaining that the texts of his lectures would only seem like carpets the wrong way round. Two remarkably sharp letters to a publishing house survive, denying that he had prepared a history of Greek civilization as they had mistakenly gathered from the "unfortunate Prof. Dr. Nietzsche who now lives in a lunatic asylum". With some reluctance he licensed his nephew Jacob Oeri to publish his papers after his death: among them there was indeed a four-volume *History of Greek Civilization* which is also (since 1963) available in English in an abbreviated version. It was the posthumous publication of the Greek history and of the *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* in 1905 which established him as one of the great historians of his time.

Since then there have been two editions of his collected works, and many separate publications. The latest vast corpus of his *opera omnia*, published by Benno Schwabe of Basel, the nine volumes of letters, the writings, and a seven-volume biography left unfinished by Werner Kaegi (who held Burckhardt's chair at Basel until quite recently) at his death make a truly monumental bulk which few private libraries could house. There is a sharp, a paradoxical contrast between Burckhardt's famous shyness and the vast industry which it masked. Now it is the huge bulk of his achievement which makes him as daunting and inaccessible as his reluctance to publish had been in his lifetime.

Anthologies have therefore become not only essential, but also inevitable. A new collection of Burckhardt's essays on art, *Die Kunst der Betrachtung* (The Art of Contemplation), edited by the German critic Henning Ritter, has been organized primarily according to the date of composition, though some of the essays are displaced thematically. They have been linked by short explanatory narratives by the editor, and annotated, though very sparsely. This makes for a good read; with the many quotations from the letters the book is a kind of

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HUGOBALL
Der Künstler und die Zeitkrankheit:
Ausgewählte Schriften
Edited by Hans Burkhard Schlichting
469pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM 40.
3518047094

intellectual biography; and it shows all too clearly the precocious universality of Burckhardt's interests — the essay on West German churches which Kugler had stimulated in the same section as the study of the Murillos in the Louvre. The book begins with the enchanting description of Milan Cathedral, reproved for not being Gothic enough, though quite forgiven for the marvellous charm and liveliness of its setting.

No comparable anthology of Burckhardt's writings on art exists: certainly nothing approaching it in English. The price has been kept relatively modest by cutting the illustrations down to those concerned with Burckhardt's life; the works of art which he discusses are not shown. Ruefully I note that there is no index. But then this is very much a book to read for enjoyment, and not to grub for reference.

In fact the English translations of his art-historical works make an odd, haphazard selection. His 1847 revision of Franz Kugler's *Handbook* was translated by "A Lady" (the pseudonym only hid Lady Eastlake) and edited by Charles Eastlake, who was President of the Royal Academy and Director of the National Gallery; since 1855 this has served several generations of English students. The posthumous *Memoirs of Rubens* were published in 1950. The best-known of his books, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, was published in 1860; the translation which has remained standard, by J. H. Middleton, did not appear until 1878, as *The Civilization*. . . . It was the only really substantial work of his which had become known in English, and it has been reprinted in various editions.

The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance has at long last also been translated by James Palmes and revised by Professor Peter Murray. It is a strange tribute to Burckhardt's clear view of the subject, as well as to his possibly still unrivalled knowledge of the primary literature that after more than a century the book can be reissued as a handbook in English translation; it is also a sad comment on the English-language studies of the subject. Mr Palmes skirts nimbly round the technical difficulties of the text, and it reads very fluently; if anything too fluently, since Burckhardt conceived it as a kind of lightning survey of what literature was available in his time ("it is not for reading" he wrote in a letter sent with a copy of the book; "I only put it together as a collection of bits of information; friend [Wilhelm] Lübke who was to enlarge and fill it out had it printed *sale quate*"). It was then (1867) part of Kugler's general History of Architecture. In 1878 it was revised (exceptionally, by Burckhardt himself) as volume I of a three-volume *History of Modern Architecture* of which "Friend Lübke" wrote the other two about Renaissance architecture outside Italy. It was revised again for a third edition by Heinrich Holzinger in 1891, and the line illustrations which Burckhardt had liked ("although I had no part in it") were replaced in part by photographs. For the first *Gesamtausgabe*, Wolfli prepared a critical text in 1932, based on the revised edition of 1878, being the last in the master's hand. The new *Collected Works* (Volume II, 1955) follow Wolfli's Palmes and Murray have preferred Hans Holzinger's text and have a great deal of useful additional bibliography, which does indeed make it a book of general use to students. Where the choice of edition has been unfortunate (to my mind) is in replacing Burckhardt's brief and inconclusive chapter on proportion by one which the Golden-Section group Friedrich Thiersch inserted into the Holzinger edition; with the aged Burckhardt's assent, or at least knowledge; but it is wholly unlike the rest of the book in approach and spirit. Perhaps it is a necessary part of a presentation for the contemporary student; but it seems to me to lack in reverence to the great master.

Later and systematic art historians found Burckhardt's approach wanting. It was not properly formal, or social, or iconographic; at times it was willfully personal and moralizing, yet it always teased the historian of art into remembering that his study begins in the feeling of pleasure tempered by wonder, that alloy of feelings without which there would never have been any history of culture or of art.

The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance will be published on January 7, 1985.

Two well-known documents of Zürich Dada mark the beginning and the end of Hugo Ball's brief ascendancy over the movement. The first, reprinted in this volume, is the laconic notice, "When I founded the Cabaret Voltaire. . .", which tells how, in February 1916, Ball rented a room at the corner of the Spiegelgasse and launched therein the first Dada cabaret. The second is a photo of Ball clad in the cylindrical "obelisk" costume, complete with striped wizard's hat and cardboard collar, in which, on one of the last nights at the Cabaret Voltaire, he recited the nonsense poem "Gadji beri bimba. . .".

These two documents span an implicit success story for the Dada enterprise, and one tends to situate them within a general picture of the Zürich Dadas seen as a joyous collective banditry, a gang which vandalized aesthetic decorum in the name of anti-art. Yet it is worth pondering the more personal and symptomatic meanings hidden here.

Ball's little affidavit about his negotiations with a certain Herr Ephraim over renting night-club space neglects to mention that it was in just the same low-life ambience that he had been working for the past four months. When Ball emigrated to Switzerland in May 1915, with his lifelong companion Emmy Hennings, he had no money or contacts. It was only after skirting starvation and suicidal depression that the couple got jobs with a variety troupe in Zürich and later in Basel. Emmy became a *chanteuse*, while Ball sat at the piano, obliged to rattle the keys all night long as accompanist to every act on the bill — singers, dancers, acrobats, conjurers. The incessant work nearly drove him mad, and he only put up with the torments of this caricature of an artistic life as a kind of wilful season in hell — an assuage that none the less terrified him (though it did not prevent him writing about it a little later in one of his most engaging books, the comic novel *Flametti*, published in 1918).

Thus Ball's brainwave of mounting the Cabaret Voltaire should be seen not simply as the gesture of a former Expressionist keen to pioneer a fresh version of rebel art, but also as that of a desperate exile who needed to orchestrate his energies around something more far-reaching than a dead-end variety show: Dada was Ball's bid for recognition in a foreign land, a bid too for intellectual companionship and, not least, a measure of financial security.

Ball's account of Zürich Dada is given in *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* (translated as *Flight out of Time*, Viking Press, 1974), a revised selection from his private diaries. According to him, the participants functioned in collectively turbulent and yet individually meaningful, even "disciplined" ways. Ball certainly monitored Dada absurdity, steering towards a peculiar apotheosis of self-illumination. So it was that, having led his expeditionary force into the jungle of multilingual poems, chants and spontaneous dances, with Huelsenbeck's African drumming and Janco's barbaric masks thrown in, Ball wound up his contribution to the proceedings with a climactic rendering of a sound-poem during which, waving his arms under their stiff cardboard casing, he found himself channelling the meaningless syllables into the cadences of the Catholic liturgy. His diary entry for June 23, 1916 contains a revealing aside about the fervour with which he had attached mass as a child in Flimins; then goes on to describe how he was carried perspiring off stage, savouring the self-induced ecstasy of his performance as a "magical bishop". "Gadji beri bimba" did signify; after all, nihilistic nonsense had become revitalizing ritual.

Given that the exhausted Ball soon ceded the Dada leadership to Tristan Tzara, we may date from that evening his perception of his vocation as implying a horizon far more distant than that of the club pianist of the avant-garde impasse — he was now to be a kind of shaman of art and life, and within whose innermost being were to be played out the cultural temptations

and contradictions of the age. His neo-Romantic (one might even say Kleistian) image of himself was that of the elect victim of a *Zeitgeist* which he must both assimilate and transcend, journeying via rebellion and rootlessness towards some sort of spiritual centre or "homecoming".

To pinpoint these symptomatic moments in Ball's Dada experience is to give the merest glimpse of the multiple aspects of his career. At various times, he could function as a poet, an actor, a musician, a critic, a political commentator, a theological scholar, and even — according to Emmy's sentimental version of his final years — an unassuming saint in a Ticino village. He was at various times good friends with such differing intellectuals as Kandinsky, Huelsenbeck, Ernst Bloch and Hermann Hesse. Moreover, Ball's intellectual curiosity exposed him to a host of influences. Having abandoned his university studies at Munich in 1910, not bothering to submit his completed thesis on Nietzsche, he later devoted himself to a cheerful autodidactic eclecticism, absorbing the ideas of figures as divergent as Wilhelm Weitling and Boehme, Ludwig Klages and Rimbaud, Jung and Carl Schmitt.

A condensed answer to the query, "How does this all hold together?" might start from the proposition that Ball was, at base, a German Expressionist of mystical stripe who had swallowed a strong early dose of Nietzsche's dionysiac individualism, along with the anarchism of Bakunin (that other sometime exile in Zürich). One can readily see why Ball might have committed himself to self-determination as an absolute priority, and why he so hated the constraints of ideology and cultural inhibition. These principles he then extended to inform a personal crusade on behalf of the imagination and the unconscious, which ran parallel (though, as far as I know, without contact) with the Surrealist revolution in Paris. Finally, this cluster of values spawned such variants as a love of the magical, the fantastical, and a soft spot for alchemy and mysticism. Ball's was a receptive artistic sensibility situated at the confluence of so many contemporary currents that he becomes almost a paradigm of Continental Modernism — even if there remains something of woeful eccentricity in his private life.

The present volume is a valuable collection of texts scattered across Ball's career, several of them unpublished. They include the Nietzsche dissertation; pieces about Dada (though not the Dada Diary); the short fantasy *Derenda der Phantasi* (composed in 1914–20), which has had a considerable reputation as a text hard of access, but which, to my mind, turns out to be a clumsy, even boring bit of whimsy; a selection of political editorials written in the post-Dada period, when Ball moved into the steady employ of the Berne-based émigré journal *Die freie Zeitung*; and later pieces of socio-cultural criticism of a utopian or mystical cast.

The political articles are public statements, couched in a firm, clipped style worlds away from Dada nonseriousity. They vociferously attack the German war-machine and its atrocities, and condemn that persistent jingoism which outlived the surrender of 1918 and choked the aspirations of the fragile social revolution which, from Switzerland, seemed almost entirely incarnated in the person of Kurt Eisner, doomed head of the short-lived Free State of Bavaria. Ball's regret for the failure of socialism in his homeland is coupled with a sublime rage that Germany might now unashamedly shrug off its war guilt and revert to the disastrous Prussian ideology of what he terms "fellow, formula and concept". Ball's death in 1927 spared him from seeing his worst fears materializing in Nazism.

The writings through the 1920s reflect an increasing emphasis on the issue of moral regeneration. Though electing to remain in exile, Ball continued to direct his voice towards his native country, even to the point of denying permission for a French translation of one of his major books, *Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz* ("A Critique of the German Intellectual Tradition", 1919). His analysis of moral and spiritual bankruptcy may be summarized, however caricatured, in the short list of his pet hates: Luther, Hegel and Kant; Bismarck; Swiss figures like Schlegel, Schopenhauer, Goethe and Schiller; and behaviourist loyalty to



Hans Arp's "Réveil", 1938, reproduced from *L'art en Suisse 1890–1980* by H. A. Luthy and H. J. J. Heuser (295pp. Lausanne: Payot, 2601 006331).

anthem and flag which betrayed authentic spirituality. Unfortunately, Ball's final thrust is to theologize his position in homespun terms that reveal a rather childlike groping for an easy solution: "It is a matter of christianizing Germany if we wish to achieve rebirth and reconciliation." Ball himself came home to Catholicism in the summer of 1920.

A more sturdy resolution is formulated in "Der Künstler und die Zeitkrankheit" ("The Artist and the Sickness of the Times"), the 1926 essay which lends its title to this volume. Ball here sketches an ideal of "moral unity" more consistent with his imaginative and anarchist impulses than the ready-made unity guaranteed by Church authority. The article, some fifty pages long, covers a startling array of intellectual sources: Ball has been reading up on psychology, psychoanalysis, psychiatry, anthropology, mythology and theology. His thoughts run towards a threefold resolution whereby the neurosis of the age is seen to affect body, soul and spirit, and hence to require the attentions of the respective practitioners of psychotherapy, art and religion. Despite the wider analogies which, for instance, equate the Freudian handling of the "demonic" forces of the unconscious with the rituals of Catholic exorcism, the essay is impressive in its earnestness of tone, deftness of reference and general cogency.

Not least among its innovations is the juxtaposition of Hans Prinzhorn's psychiatric assessment of psychotic art with a post-Dada model of the artistic personality, a juxtaposition which again chimes in with surrealist themes, as well as foreshadowing R. D. Laing: "The madman can even be considered as belonging to a mystic avant-garde. He has the 'advantage', envied by every artist, of having entered into the womb of all things, while retaining the full clarity of his senses."

At the point of lowest confidence during his night-club days, Ball had written of himself as a mere "figure of air", a creature who had so affected himself in his insane ascetics as to have forfeited all claim to be real. It is testimony to Ball's incredible will-power that he was able to drive himself from the extreme of vacuousness to its opposite, an emotional and intellectual plenitude and potency.

For all his gisms, Hugo Ball remains most fascinating as an example of the Orphic poet in avant-garde dress, a "magical bishop" who could converse with the demons of the tradition, while retaining the full clarity of his senses.

The ironies of a clown

S. Prawer

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350pp. Zürich: Diogenes DM 9.80.
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"Walter is to be sure, a man who won't let himself be pinned down or taken literally. If your approach is 'poetic', he will sober you up with a drunkard's laugh; if it is 'social', he will answer you from an aristocratic soul, even though by nature and by life-experience no one was better able than he to see into the pit of bourgeois existence — at a time when it had not yet become fashionable to do so." This comment from the pen of Robert Walser's Swiss compatriot and contemporary, Albin Zollinger, describes very well the difficulty the narrative poses for their readers. Walser is the first and best in a tradition of Swiss miniaturists whose most distinguished practitioners today are Peter Bichsel and Jörg Steiner. His cult of the small appears equally in the size of his prose-works — most of them are only a few pages long; in the minuscule handwriting in which many of them have come down to us — it is so crabbed and tiny that not all of the works have yet been deciphered; and in his favourite themes.

How very appropriate, then, that the volumes of the Suhrkamp edition, attractively bound in marbled covers, should be in octavo format! Walser is at the opposite pole of those masters of the twentieth-century German novel whose writings raise world-historical issues in weighty discussions at a high intellectual level, often at great length: Thomas Mann, say, or Hermann Broch, or Musil in *The Man without Qualities*, or Hesse in *The Glass Bead Game*. "To be frank," one of Walser's Bartleby-like characters tells a potential employer in a letter applying for a subordinate clerkship, "I am a Chinaman; that is to say, I am a man who sees beauty and charm in everything that is small and modest; all that is large and makes great demands I find terrible and terrifying."

Among typical characters that appear in his short novels and narrative sketches are clerks and servants with no wish for responsibility and no ambition to rise in the social or business hierarchy; like the central figure of "The Assistant" (*Der Gehülfe*), whose employer is as doomed to failure as he is himself; adolescents whose progress seems an inversion of that of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, like the eponymous hero of *Jakob von Gunten*; and wanderers who make brief sojourns in bookshops, banks, private houses and gardens without belonging to any of these and without being able to subscribe, for any length of time, to the values of their owners and inhabitants. The most memorable of these is the narrator of "The Walk", (*Der Spaziergang*), which has fortunately been congenially translated into English, along with other short stories, by Christopher Middleton, to whom we also owe an English version of *Jakob von Gunten*.

Much of Walser's fiction is based on his own experiences as bank clerk, copyist, shop assistant, domestic servant, secretary to a failed inventor, frequenter of railway stations, bars, cafés, the cheap seats of theatres and cinemas, the streets of Berlin and other cities, and as a wanderer through the Swiss landscape. In Berlin, where he stayed with his brother, the painter Karl Walser, he found a publisher for some of his novels and short pieces, and he also managed to place many of his brief essays in the "feuilleton" sections of the newspapers. His final years were spent in a Swiss sanatorium for the mentally ill where he was neither "pleasant nor obviously unhappy", but where he ceased writing for publication. "I am not here to write," he said, characteristically, "I am here to be crazy"; and again, referring to Hölderlin's very similar last years: "I am convinced that he was not as unhappy in the last thirty years of his life as the professors of literature like to make out. To be able to dream one's life away, to be able to dream without constantly having to be reminded of the dream, is a gift."

to fulfil demands and claims — that, surely, is not martyrdom." He was allowed out for long walks, from one of which he failed to return — searchers found his frozen body in the snow. His life had lasted from 1878 to 1956. Kafka, Musil, Walter Benjamin had recognized his genius in the first decades of the century; but general recognition of his importance had to wait until his silence and death. Such recognition is due in large measure to the pioneer activity of Carl Seelig and Jochen Greven, who made Walser's work accessible.

The new Suhrkamp edition bears witness to their work. It includes a generous selection of stories and sketches; the three novels which contain the fullest working out of Walser's favourite themes (*Die Geschwister Tanner*, *Jakob von Gunten*, *Der Gehülfe*); and a later work, *Der Rüber* ("The Brigand"), in which Walser's manner of story-telling has become associative and deliberately discontinuous in a way that recalls recent experiments in narrative like those of Friederike Mayröcker. The themes of *Der Rüber*, however, are related to the better-known earlier work: the child or adolescent, and his or her relation to grown-ups; the outsider who may be dubbed a criminal; the sexual deviant; the drunkard; the writer who comes up against the limits of his art — all these are familiar figures of Walser's world. The changes of mood too — the determined cheerfulness into which sorrow breaks, is chased out, and returns — are alternations we find in those earlier works to which Benjamin referred when he said of Walser's characters: "They come out of the night where it is darkest, a Venetian night, if you will, illuminated by meagre paper-lanterns of hope; with a little festive sparkle in their eyes, but distraught and close to tears."

Readers who encounter Walser for the first

Safely trapped

Martin Davies

ROLF KIESER
Erzwungene Symbole: Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Georg Kaiser und Bertolt Brecht im Schweizer Exil
267pp. Bern: Paul Haupt. Sw fr 32.
3258 033048

Switzerland, a neutral territory in a Europe riven by ideology, an orderly, prosperous society in the midst of political chaos: what more congenial refuge for the German or Austrian writer in exile? Yet for Thomas Mann, who stayed from 1933 to 1938, and for Brecht who stayed briefly in 1933 and again in 1947–48, Switzerland was only a staging-post between a continent in collapse and the New World. While for Georg Kaiser who came in August, 1938 and Musil who arrived in September of the same year, Switzerland was a trap from which an obscure death — for Musil in 1942, for Kaiser in 1945 — was the only escape. *Erzwungene Symbole* shows that Switzerland did not meet these exiles' expectations and explains why the result of their enforced co-existence with the country was, pathetically, "a blank white page".

Rolf Kieser shows that exile made these authors realize how far their lives, let alone their art, had depended on congenial working conditions and receptive literary institutions, which emigration had severely disrupted. But he also registers their bewilderment that material insecurity should confront them in a land which had a literary language and an intellectual culture in common with their native Germany or Austria. But then Switzerland's position was itself precarious. Kieser points out that the Swiss feared their powerful German neighbour would invade. They had accepted thousands of refugees from Nazism, hostages to fortune, who were a potential threat to national security and a burden on their social institutions. In this context the exiled writer was most vulnerable and potentially most subversive. Individual acts of generosity apart, initial grudging sympathy for the writer in exile soon turned into official bureaucratic which at times even culminated with the Nazi régime.

Kieser shows that for the exiled writer life consisted of shuffling compromises between the

time have to cope with three main difficulties. One of these, his constant shifts of tone, has already been mentioned. Walser will launch into an enthusiastic description which he then deflates with ironic reflections on the narrator's own enthusiasm and questionable relation to his public; yet the enthusiasm and its romantic or pseudo-romantic expression will be found necessary and justified, along with its partial deflation, when the economy of the whole story, its interplay of moods, joys and sadnesses, is considered. The second difficulty concerns the literary subtext of a great deal of his writing. Its deliberate simplicity and apparent naïveté conceal a profusion of literary references. The pedagogic province of *Wilhelm Meister*, Schiller's *Don Carlos*, the "good-for-nothing" hero of Eichendorff's *Taugenichts*, Chamisso's Peter Schlemihl, the writings and characters of the great Swiss classics Keller and Goethe, are constant presences behind the figures and scenes of Walser's narratives. Of particular importance are the stories of Kleist (we encounter deliberate pastiche of Kleist's distinctive style on several occasions); Jean Paul's *Wutz*; Büchner's story *Lenz*, to which there are frequent stylistic and thematic references; and the miniatures of J. P. Hebel. Here readers have cause to be grateful to Daniel Keel and the Diogenes Verlag, who have collected and brought out in a single volume, Walser's essays on writers and artists, whose determinedly personal vision, keeping close to some particular reading-experience or a performance witnessed in a particular mood, is equalled in Swiss literature only by Ulrich Bräker's writings on Shakespeare and in German literature only by Matthias Claudius's remarks on Klopstock and Goethe. Nor are Walser's interests purely literary; Keel reminds us of his interest in the visual arts, fostered

moral judgments, political expediency, artistic integrity and the imperatives of survival. But even this reduced existence was tenuously dependent on fame (what Heinrich Mann called "a widespread error concerning one's self").

Thomas Mann, on holiday when Hitler seized power, remained in Switzerland to await the outcome of events; neither he nor his books had been proscribed. Compliant Swiss authorities facilitated immigration procedures; outwardly he soon adapted to the patrician milieu of Küssnacht. But privately Mann, *de facto* the representative of German culture in exile, was depressed by what he called "the impossibility of correct behaviour". By 1935, while not breaking with Germany, he was seriously contemplating a change of continent. By 1936 this equivocation had become compromising: Mann had to defend his publisher against the charges of collaborating with Goebbels; for this Erika and Klaus, his children, accused him of betraying the emigration; shortly after, Eduard Korrodi, the eminent Swiss newspaper editor, dismissed German exile literature as the product of second-rate Jewish novelists. Under intense family pressure Mann finally answered these xenophobic accusations and so made public his renunciation of Germany.

By contrast, Kaiser came to Switzerland to avoid worsening financial and domestic difficulties. Refused entry to America after 1941, because his sons were in the German army, he suffocated in exile. His Expressionist heyday over, he became a pathetic figure, humiliated by the public rejection of his last plays, yet raging with self-aggrandizement in private. Brecht, however, returned to Switzerland in a creative frame of mind. He was adept at living on the move: ready to leave in forty-eight hours, and with his works on microfilm, *Mutter Courage*, *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* and *Leben des Galilei* had been the theatrical events of the war years in Zürich; putting his dramatic ideas into practice mattered more to him now than the audiences' favour.

But surely, for these writers, Musil suffered most. The *Angelus* deprived him of financial support; emigration promised the only hope of survival as a writer. But exile meant humiliating requests to the authorities to extend his stay, or permit him to read publicly from his works, quibbles over expense, claims and domestic arrangements, and an almost total lack of artistic freedom. Who, readership, though, the reputation, the critical success, the

by his brother Karl, which profoundly influenced his presentation of landscape and city. Walser is also a master of the verbal cartoon, who occasionally brings into his art something of the spirit of graphic caricature.

The third difficulty is related to the other two. Walser is a literary minimalist, who demands from us a concentration, a deliberately slowed-up reading speed, that we usually reserve for lyric poetry. Walser did write such poetry, which has been collected, and in which his distinctive voice can be heard; but his finest work is in his flexible prose rather than in his verse. It is best to begin with one of the novels — *Jakob von Gunten*, or *Der Gehülfe*; or with a longer prose-piece like *Der Spaziergang*. That allows his style to assert its power, and to prepare us for the kind and degree of concentration required for his often so apparently artless, improvised, stylistically slipshod shorter works, whose "charmed ironic clownishness" suggests, as Christopher Middleton has rightly said, the archetype of the Holy Fool. Walser has spoken of "retreating into the snailshell of the short story and the feuilleton"; but an early admirer like Efraim Frisch spoke for many when he said that Walser had built rainbow dream-bridges from the deep below to the highest above. Walser would have deflated that image with one of his ironic asides; but he knew as well as anyone that the surface of his art concealed much more than the casual feuilleton reader could ever suspect. At one point he even said: "No one is entitled to behave towards me as though he knew me." His work fascinates us, draws us, once we have fallen under its spell, to return to it again and again; but only a critical Rosencrantz or Guildenstern would claim that he had penetrated the heart of its mystery. That Hamlet-like elusiveness is perhaps the deepest secret of its appeal.

would endorse this author who thought Thomas Mann too verbose and Hermann Broch too naturalistic? Bitterly resentful of Mann, Broch and Stefan Zweig, whose fame had been their passport out of Europe, ill and increasingly withdrawn, Musil sacrificed everything to his work. But he saw most clearly into the exile's condition. He felt as powerfully yet as vulnerable as "a buffalo with horns on his head". A diary entry reads: "Extraterrestrische des gebirgen Menschen, ist der richtige Term in dieser Blut-, Boden-, Rasse-, Masse-, Führer- und Heimatzeit."

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Truly cosmopolitan

David Gascoyne

Charles-Albert Cingria: 1883-1954
85pp. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale. Fr65.
CHARLES-ALBERT CINGRIA
Bols sec bols vert
286pp. Paris: Gallimard. Fr32
Florides helvètes et autres textes
197pp. Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme. Sw fr8.

In March of this year the Bibliothèque Nationale gave up its Salon d'Honneur to an exhibition celebrating the life and work of Charles-Albert Cingria. In 1983 its Swiss counterpart in Bern had put on a similar display to mark the centenary of the writer's birth. Five pages of the BN's Exhibition catalogue are devoted to a chronological summary of Cingria's life, which was neither dramatic nor merely sedentary; it was the outwardly uneventful existence of one entirely devoted to cultivating his unusual skill in the use of words, his musical insight, and an idiosyncratic perception of periods, places and people. The possibility that Cingria was one of the most representative Swiss writers of the century has only recently begun to emerge; yet it may become a commonly-accepted assessment within the next twenty-five years.

A formative factor that cannot be ignored is the circumstance that he was of mixed parentage and far from being purely Swiss. While his father's family was of Turko-Yugoslav extraction, on his mother's side he was of predominantly Polish descent. The father settled in Geneva in the mid-nineteenth century, was naturalized in 1870 and became before long an executive partner in the Patek Philippe clock and watch manufacturing firm. This accounts for the relatively affluent bourgeois background of Cingria's youth, which enabled him to travel extensively in Europe, North Africa and Turkey before the First World War, and to receive a musical education not only under the pianist Jacques-Dalcroze but also in abbeys specializing in the study of medieval music. But from about 1914 onwards, an attic apartment in Paris became Cingria's principal base, while his lifestyle became more spartanly bohemian than conventionally middle-class. He continued for the rest of his life to return intermittently to his native Switzerland, the atmosphere, small-town traditions and culture of which retained an abiding attraction for him.

Not long after 1954, when Cingria had been taken back from Aix-en-Provence in extremis to end his life in a Geneva hospital, Jean Paulhan, the most eminent literary mandarin of the time, declared: "Charles-Albert Cingria is a great French writer who died at the age of sixty-two without anyone noticing the fact." Since Paulhan was as early as 1933 induced Cingria to contribute a regular "Air du Mois" feature to the *NRF*, it is hardly surprising that he should later refer to him simply as a French writer. Yet since 1904, when with C.-P. Ramuz and others he had collaborated pseudonymously in the publication of *Les Penates d'Argile*, an "essai de littérature romande", Cingria had never lacked a small but appreciative readership in Switzerland, and his earliest writings were, as the term *romande* suggests, mainly concerned with matters Vaudois. His life-long interest in the romance languages, and the considerable erudition concerning the troubadour and chivalresque musical and poetic tradition that this prompted him to acquire, account for a great part of his less accessible writing. Implicit in this special preoccupation is a conception of Switzerland as the central crossroads of European civilization. The paradox of a stereotypically parochial Helvetia: Confederation inseparable from the notion of a heartland of truly cosmopolitan internationalism is as strikingly illustrated by Cingria and his work as by any other modern Swiss author.

"L'Œuvre", the 24-page study to be found in *Bols sec bols vert*, represents a concentrated expression of Cingria's fascinated absorption in the international ramifications of the tradition linking minstrelsy, troubadours and trouvères. Its subject is, of course, the Sordello identified in Browning's long poem of 1840. Brief as is Cingria's sketch of the origins of perhaps the most enduring style of European lyric poetry, it nevertheless contains a number of excellent illustrative quotations, drawn from medieval German, from Provencal and from

the Italian of Dante, demonstrating its theme of the cross-fertilization responsible for the abundant first flowering of what centuries later took the form we know as Romanticism.

The first of Cingria's substantial expositions of this theme, *La Civilisation de Saint-Gall*, was published in 1929. Like its successors, the *Pétrarque* of 1932, and the last full-length book to appear in his life-time, *La Reine Berthe et sa famille* of 1947, it was the fruit of over thirty years study and reflection. The predominantly musicological study of the monastic community of Saint-Gall, where towards the end of the ninth century the monk Notker ("the Stammeier") and his colleague Tutilon pioneered regular metric forms and musical notation based on neumes, can be read with pleasure and profit by the layman, even if scholars may be suspicious of the unorthodox exuberance of its presentation. Three years later, Cingria's next book, on Petrarch, aroused the enthusiasm of Stravinsky, who must have first met him through their mutual friend Ramuz, the librettist of *L'Histoire du Soldat*. The composer wrote to Cingria: "Quel beau livre que votre *PÉTRARQUE*! Je le lis avec une joie infinie! Pas un instant de détente - j'aime ça. Merci, cher ami, de me l'avoir envoyé et si flatteusement dédié." It is of some interest to note that this book was reviewed the following year in the *NRF* by Denis de Rougemont, author of the then recently published *L'Amour et l'Occident*, a once influential though now neglected work, the theme of which is closely related to those that concerned Cingria, if from a somewhat different standpoint.

The BN Catalogue contains a quotation that conveys something of the savour of Cingria's style: "s'il faut définir la poésie, j'estime que

couler du bitume sur le trottoir ou construire un orgue avec des boîtes de conserve est bien plus efficace en puissance de verbe que de palir sur des encyclopédies", a comment representative of the truculent verve of so many of Cingria's less specialized writings. These fall under three main headings: there are pieces of an autobiographical nature, evocative principally of places in France or Switzerland, or of Rome; episodic narratives usually centred on some more or less fantastic personage or "original"; and pieces best classified perhaps as improvisations. To this last group belong some of the writings most cherished by Cingria's devotees, such as the unforgettable "Petit Labyrinthe harmonique", another of the items included in *Bols sec bols vert*.

The frontispiece to the BN Catalogue consists of a photograph of Cingria taken in his mid-fifties: a stocky figure in an open-necked, short-sleeved shirt, his head wrapped in the bandanna of a buccaneer, with a humorously determined mouth and eyes capable of expressing both pathos and malice. It is an image that seems hard to reconcile with the fact that the first French writer to have encouraged him, at the time of the 1914-18 war, was Paul Claudel, with whom he maintained a warm relationship of apparently mutual admiration during thirty subsequent years. The other friends of his first Paris period were obviously of the kind one might expect to have appreciated his singularities: Max Jacob, Cocteau, Stravinsky, Marinetti, Modigliani, Cendrars, Léautaud, Jouhandeau, Tzara and Georges Hugnet, for example. Among these representatives of what was then the *avant-garde*, it is perhaps Jacob with whom one might surmise that Cingria had the closest affinity, if only

because of a seemingly unmistakable resemblance between the *loufoque*, phantasmagoric notations of *Le Cornet à d'ès* or the incongruities of *Le Cabinet noir*, and certain of Cingria's more extravagantly burlesque (if on amination less gratuitous) fantasies, such as "Hippolyte Hippocampe" or "Xenia et le Diamant" (both in *Bols sec bols vert*). But Cingria seems never to have associated himself with anything like an *avant-garde* movement or with "modernism". He never strove for originality but was himself simply an original being, one of whose dominant characteristics was conviviality, as illustrated by his frequent use of the first person plural in narratives of rural or urban excursions ("avançons un peu. Qu'y a-t-il maintenant?" "Et maintenant, comme la lune apparaît, remontons.") The sense of intimacy thus created combined with his ability to bring to immediate life on the page both facts from the millennial past and details of yesterday's odd observations, may explain why it is that today he appears so contemporary a figure. Let me quote in conclusion the voice of Charles-Albert, making a pronouncement of buoyant finality:

Je ne pense plus maintenant - j'ai déjà réfléchi à pas mal de choses - que nous ayons été mis au monde pour savoir ce que c'est que la vie. Déjà, sans le dire, nous le savons. Oui, ce n'est pas un indice de supériorité sur l'animal. Oui, rien que du fait que nous craignons tant l'eau et les poissons tellement l'air, nous trouvons les uns et les autres que nous savons très bien, malgré nos souffrances, ce que c'est sinon la vie, au moins le privilège extraordinaire et que nous tenons à conserver le plus longtemps possible d'être au nombre des êtres vivants.

Cingria's *Oeuvres Complètes* have recently been published by L'Age d'Homme in Lausanne, in seventeen volumes at Sw fr35 each.

Powers of reproduction

John H. Mole

CATHERINE COLOMB
Châteaux en enfance
233pp. Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme.
ETIENNE BARILLIER
La Créature
169pp. Lausanne: Julliard/L'Age d'Homme.
2260 00383 4

Châteaux en enfance was first published in 1945. At that time it was greeted as a highly original work but failed to achieve recognition as a formative influence in the development of the French novel which some critics now think it deserves. It merits a second look after the forty years of experimentation in narrative technique that have followed its first appearance.

The plot follows the conventions of the provincial family saga. The protagonists are taken up with the propagation of money, the cultivation of status, the conservation of the family tree. They shelter from the momentous behind the trivial. There is a pervading sense of dissolution and mortality. The height of sensual pleasure is a dish of "poulet aux morilles". The storms that buffet the rest of the world are reduced to gusts and ripples by the time they have crossed the Alps. *Châteaux en enfance* will do nothing to dispel the prejudices of Parisian and other sophisticates about the quality of Swiss bourgeois life. Is the comfort worth the tedium?

The technique of characterization is the one taught in traditional writing classes: pick out an idiosyncrasy and repeat it every time the character appears. There are some brilliantly witty and acerbic little portraits, but the challenge over a full-length novel is to convert a collection of idiosyncrasies into coherent patterns of behaviour. Clearly the author was not interested in meeting it. To her, depth and development are not as important as creating a succession of images.

Etienne Barillier, in his preface to this reissue, points out that the originality and importance of the book lie not in conventional values like plot and characterization but in the creation of a different world of the imagination out of everyday words and symbols. We are recommended to look past the arrogant bankers and rich farmers, the banal gossip and tedious family dinners. They are only the material used in the weaving of an elaborate and coherent fantasy that is its own justification.

Catherine Colombo's style is based on a deliberate fragmentation of the narrative. An episode spanning several years is described in one sentence, an incident lasting a few moments takes a page. Three sentences describe a plate of mushrooms, the history of a Russian branch of the family and an event in the village twenty years before. It is disorienting, sometimes irritating and always demanding concentration. The surreal juxtaposition of disparate events can be hilarious. It is like following the thread through the rambling reminiscences of the granny in the corner; the effect is of an enormous trick of the memory. Barillier's claims for the book are legitimate; it does succeed in creating an atmosphere of its own.

He has the opportunity to put his ideas about the nature of reality and artistic creation into practice in his own new novel, *La Créature*. His style is conventional and his writing academic, but he lets his imagination work on a fantastical tale of unusual characters.

An artist is commissioned by a wealthy count in Venice to paint a copy of the Bellini Madonna. He succeeds so well that the forgery is indistinguishable from the original. This is convenient for two reasons. The Count likes to steal original old masters for his private collection, putting replicas in their place; the artist likes to meditate at length on the nature of Truth and Beauty and Reality. In payment for his services the Count gives the artist a living forgery, a perfect replica of a woman called Eva. As well as being endowed with a perfect body she behaves and speaks in a perfectly natural way. She knows by heart the Blue Guide to Venice and the even bluer guides to

making love. She obeys his every wish, down to the slightest smile and gesture. For those who make do, as the Count did in his early days, with a rubber inflatable and Ravel's Bolero it does not seem such a bad bargain.

But as well as providing the opportunity for further meditations on Truth, Beauty and so on, Eve gives rise to serious misgivings in the artist about his own feelings and motivations. He realizes that she is only a reflection of his own desires and inadequacies. She has no free will, no soul, no capacity for love, and he has no inhibitions about using such outmoded concepts. The originality of the story lies in the development of the lover from an automaton to a warm and unique human being. Most people experience it the other way round.

There is a very anachronistic feel to *La Créature*. Villiers de l'Isle Adam's *Eve Future* and Hoffman's *Coppelia* are the mad Count's inspiration as they are the author's. The idea of a robot lover and the light it sheds on the pathology of emotion and identity belongs more to the end of the last century than to this one. In the age of artificial intelligence and robotics, behaviour modification and organ transplants, we may still worry about the true nature of humanity and what constitutes the core of identity but we have more sophisticated metaphors for exploring it.

Barillier's book is an extension of his preface to *Châteaux en enfance*. The theme of both novels is the artificiality of art, the creating of replicas that have a life independent from the original. The question not answered satisfactorily by either is whether the new worlds they create are more interesting than the prototype.

The Geneva-based journal *Furor* marks its fifth year with issue No 12 (October 1984) entirely devoted to the visual arts and a separate booklet, *Entretiens*, which affirms an editorial policy of proliferation and mobility. Sobriety printed on creamy paper with monochrome reproductions, *Furor* has an air of poise and serenity that reflects its aim of channelling the "frenzy" of the contemporary avant-garde. The sphere of reference is twofold; based on the interplay of images and texts. Each issue introduces the work of at least one young experimental artist, represented by a select sheet of photographs: the deliberate eschewing of commentary enables these pages to stand in their own right. British readers will note an

artists as Tony Cragg, John Hilliard and Karen Knorr. The textual scope of the magazine is pluralistic, with literary-critical, art-historical, psychoanalytical and philosophical essays. The rich checklist of contributors cites such names as Genette, Deguy, Pascal Quignard, J. P. Richard, Kristeva and Pierre Fédois, and there is a tacit agreement to forego any distinction between critical and creative writing. The guiding spirit of the journal is the Swiss-French critic Daniel Wilhem, whose own essays insist on the centrality of the Viennese tradition of Musil and Krass, adding a note of non-Gallo irony to confirm the cosmopolitan as well as cross-disciplinary ambitions of this publication.

Four literatures in one

Waldson Gsteiger

WALDSON (Editor)
History of Modern Swiss Literature
Vol. 1. Wolff. £9.50.
1984085

Many years ago, Fritz Ernst, Professor of Comparative Literature at Zürich University, gave a lecture entitled "Does Switzerland have a national literature?" Ernst was a prominent proponent of literary "Helvetism", and as the Second World War, with its strivings for cultural autonomy, was not so long over, one did not expect a negative answer from this quarter. The author of *Die Schweiz als geistige Mitteleuropa* (Zürich 1942 as a spiritual mediator) did not bring himself to state categorically that Switzerland did have a national literature, but rather with the careful formulation "Switzerland was 'more of an idea than an institution'". It is all the more surprising that, a few years later, a Polish specialist in German has taken, without reservation (in the proceedings of a conference on "German-language literature in Switzerland in the 1960s and 1970s", held by Klaus Pezold, Karl Marx University, Leipzig, 1984): "The literature of German-speaking Switzerland, as part of the Swiss national literature, has recently reached a high stage of awareness and achieved self-confidence." Although for the Swiss "insider" the question of a national literature remains somewhat dubious, it would seem that for the slight observer the unity of Switzerland as a single nation despite its four languages has a corresponding literary unity.

I. M. Waldson, Professor Emeritus of German at University College, Swansea, presents modern Swiss literature in this anthology succinctly. This entity is, however (and this is

significant), revealed in a more or less arbitrary sum of parts rather than in a thematic or formally structured coherence. The common denominator of the *morceaux choisis* presented, and for the most part translated, by Waldson is that their authors have Swiss nationality, as well as some sort of contemporaneity or "modernity", which is probably more a question of chronology than of style. Hence, this book is part of a series of "national" PEN anthologies, along with *Modern Swedish Literature*, *Modern Austrian Literature* and *Modern Yiddish Literature* (the last in particular has less claim than the others to be a "national literature" in the accepted sense). The cover shows the political frontiers of the nation, the Confederation Helvetica, to which this literature (in the singular) is attributed, together with the various cantons and language frontiers (and here there is a distressing error: Francophone Jura is included in an exclusively German-speaking Switzerland, being at the time of the "national" basis, the important authors whose origins are Swiss, such as Robert Pinget or Jean-Luc Benoziglio, are absent?)

It is not difficult to criticize an anthology. Anyone who knows the subject at all well will always find gaps or fault the choice. It would be unfair to expect this book to be complete (as regards both authors chosen and works, several here represented by fragments a few pages long). Waldson has obviously made an effort to include as many authors as possible and to give the linguistic minorities more consideration than they perhaps deserve. But it is inevitable that certain questions remain open. When "modern" does not just mean "living" but covers several authors long dead (Werner Zemp, A. X. Gwerder) whose writing is included, why is such an important name as Ludwig Hohl missing? Not only was he an important thinker and stylist, but he also influenced a whole generation with his critical attitude to the affluent society. Why omit Gustave Roud and Catherine Colomb for French-speaking, and Piero Bianconi for Italian speaking, Switzerland? When not only works of fiction but also essays are included in the prose section (an extract from Paul Nizon's "Diskurs aus der Enge" for instance), the absence of Denis de Rougemont is incomprehensible: he would have been a most convincing representative of "Swissness". And to name two authors now in mid-career, neither Otto F. Walter nor Jean Vuilleumier should be excluded from an anthology of modern Swiss writing.

Professor Waldson's choice is therefore thoroughly subjective; this applies also to his decision, not really justified but for which he gives reasons, to exclude drama. But with a book of this sort, the reader should not dwell on its deficiencies, but rather consider what has been achieved. And here the result is very positive. Waldson has succeeded in documenting the richness and complexity of modern Swiss literature in most persuasive fashion. For this, and not least for his remarkable work of translation from German and French, we should be grateful. This book is not so much a "guide" as an illustration (one possible illustration) of literary Switzerland today, of a national literature which isn't one. The editor's introduction also makes interesting and agreeable reading. He rightly indicates the specific nature of Swiss political problems since 1945 and the continuing conflict of the post-war generation (to which in this sense Frisch and Dürrenmatt also belong) with established models and institutions. The fact that he also stresses the affinities of Swiss authors with their foreign, including their British, colleagues, should be taken by the reader as a warning not to see these texts from a strange "national literature" as literary curiosities, but as part of modern world literature.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Ezra Pound: any letters of importance from him, or concerning him; for a biography. Humphrey Carpenter. 6 Farnham Road, Oxford OX2 6RS.

The Oxford English Dictionary: for a Companion to the OED now being compiled, any material illustrating how the dictionary has been used, regarded or enjoyed - personal observations, anecdotes, linguistic criticism, etc. Peter Davies. Casa Annanika, Fola-Monchega, Algarve, Portugal.

Verses inscribed or worked on physical objects - buildings, fountains, sundials, crosses, ceramics, bells, clocks, etc - but excluding epigraphs; primarily in England or in English; for an anthology in preparation. John Holloway. Queens' College, Cambridge CB3 9ET.

John Franklin Jameson, (1859-1937), American historian: any information relating to his life - letters, essays and addresses, reminiscences, etc; for a selective edition of Jameson's papers and correspondence. Mores D. Rothberg. Jacqueline A. Goggin. J. Franklin Jameson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540, USA.

Sir Isaac Newton: alchemical/chemical and theological papers; any manuscripts in private hands or outside major institutional collections; for an edition to be published by Cambridge University Press. R. H. Popkin. Department of Philosophy, Washington University, St Louis, Missouri 63130, USA.

Dr David Eder: whereabouts of his papers, particularly those on which J. B. Hobman based his *David Eder* (Gollancz, 1945); also *Sir Sidney Low* (1857-1932): whereabouts of papers, especially the diary relied on by Desmond Chapman-Huston for his *The Lost Historian* (John Murray, 1936). John Curwell. 5 Price Arthur Road, Hampstead, London NW3 6AX.

More "Information, Please" appears on page 1412.

INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

- Aubert, Jean-François. *Exposé des institutions politiques de la Suisse à partir de quelques affaires controversées 1435*
- Ball, Hugo. *Der Künstler und die Zeitkrankheit: Ausgewählte Schriften 1428*
- Bariller, Etienne. *La Créature 1430*
- Barton, Anne. *Ben Jonson, Dramatist 1417*
- Berger, Jean-François. *Histoire économique de la Suisse 1400*
- Blaukopf, Herta (Editor). *Gustav Mahler - Richard Strauss: Correspondence 1888-1911 1401*
- Brugg, Melvyn. *Laurence Olivier 1418*
- Brandreth, Gyles. *John Gielgud: A celebration 1418*
- Brassel, Ruedi, and others (Editors). *Zauberformel: Fauler Zauber? SP-Bundesratsabteilung und Opposition in der Schweiz 1425*
- Brown, Clive. *Louis Spohr: A critical biography 1401*
- Burckhardt, Jacob. *Die Kunst der Betrachtung: Aufsätze und Vorträge. Die Architektur der Italien Renaissance 1427*
- Callow, Simon. *Being an Actor 1418*
- Cingria, Charles-Albert. *Bois sec bois vert. Florides helvètes et autres textes 1430*
- Clark, J. Kent. *Goodwin Wharton 1405*
- Colomb, Catherine. *Châteaux en enfance 1430*
- Deakin, James. *Straight Stuff: The reporters, the White House and the truth 1406*
- De La Harpe, César-Frédéric. *Correspondance sous la République Helvétique 1421*
- Donaldson, Frances. *The British Council: The first fifty years 1407*
- Dutton, H. J. *The Patent System and Inventive Activity During the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1853 1402*
- Gibson, William. *Neuromancer 1420*
- Gormley, Logan (Editor). *The Beaverbrook 'Knew' 1406*
- Grinevald, Jacques, André Gaponer, Lucie Hanouz and Pierre Lehmann. *La Quadrature du CERN 1425*
- Harrison, Harry. *West of Eden 1420*
- Haymann, Emmanuel. *Le Camp du Bout du Monde: 1942, Des enfants juifs de France à la frontière suisse 1426*
- Hinshay, Gerri. *Nowhere to Run: The story of a music 1419*
- Hobson, Harold. *Theatre in Britain: A personal view 1418*
- Hoppen, K. Theodore. *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland 1832-1885 1403*
- Hornshill, David A. *From the American System to Mass Production 1800-1932: The development of manufacturing technology in the United States 1402*
- Lakerwood, Christopher. *Prater Violet. The World in the Evening, A Meeting by the River. Exhumations 1408*
- Jaccottet, Philippe. *A travers un verger. La Saison: 1954-1979 1432*
- Kleiser, Rolf. *Erzwingende Symbiose: Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Georg Kaiser und Bertold Brecht im Schweizer Exil 1429*
- Kilworth, Garry. *The Songbirds of Pain 1420*
- Longworth, Philip. *Atsds: Tsar of All the Russias 1421*
- McDonald, Iverach. *The History of The Times: Volume V, Struggles in war and peace 1939-1966 1406*
- McPhee, John. *The Swiss Army: La place de la Concorde suisse 1413*
- Melli, David. *Schweizer Bauernhaus: Ländliche Bauten und ihre Bewohner 1413*
- Mellers, Wilfried. *A Darker Shade of Pale: A backdrop to Bob Dylan 1419*
- Nesat, Alberto. *Terra Matia 1410*
- O'Meara, Patrick. *K. F. Rylee: A political biography of the December poet 1421*
- Robins, Michael H. *Promising, Intending and Moral Autonomy 1404*
- Rowell, George, and Anthony Jackson. *The Repository Movement: A history of regional theatre in Britain 1418*
- Russell, Bertrand. *Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript 1404*
- Savage, Jon. *The Jinks: The official biography 1419*
- Stadler, Peter. *Der Kulturkampf in der Schweiz 1422*
- Taylor, John Russell. *Alec Guinness: A celebration 1418*
- Torraccia-Pacha, Claire. *Le Pouvoir est pour demain: Les femmes dans la politique suisse 1425*
- Tschudi, Hans. *Wer regiert die Schweiz? 1425*
- Volkoff, Vladimir. *Vladimir, The Russian Viking 1421*
- Waldson, H. M. (Editor). *Anthology of Modern Swiss Literature 1431*
- Walter, Robert. *Romane und Erzählungen. Major Poet und Danc: Aufsätze über Kunst und Künstler 1425*
- Williams, Huwain. *Romantic and Romanticism 1425*